Gender, Justice and Security:

Structural Challenges, Feminist Innovations and Radical Futures

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The UKRI GCRF Gender, Justice and Security Hub

Dedication

Dedicated to Mustafa and Ali Durrani, and all who have lost their lives as a result of gender injustice and conflict during the period of the Hub's work.

" They will be remembered in our lives forever and their memories will remain painful for us forever. "

THE DURRANI FAMILY.

Foreword

Radhika Coomaraswamy

The 1990s were the golden era of international human rights, particularly regarding the rights of women. After the end of the Cold War and the wars in Bosnia and Rwanda, the international community came together to set standards with regard to the rules of war and peacebuilding. For women, the demand for accountability ended in the comprehensive paragraphs on sexual violence set out in the Rome Statute of International Criminal Court. In addition, Security Council resolution 1325 created a framework and the political space to deal with the issues of women in situations of armed conflict. The 1990s saw dramatic and far-reaching agendas. Today the Women, Peace and Security agenda carries some of the strengths of that era along with its weaknesses.

The strength and the momentum of the developments in the 1990s were substantial. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) created the four pillars of participation, protection, prevention and recovery as a framework to assess women, peace and security efforts. Subsequently, the Security Council passed resolutions demanding an end to sexual violence in conflict and appointed a Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Later resolutions resulted in the setting up of monitoring and reporting arrangements and the request for the creation of indicators to assess progress on WPS. They also linked the agenda with efforts to counter terrorism and insisted on a survivor-centered approach to addressing violence against women. A comprehensive normative framework has been established and the resolution in 2019 called for full implementation.

As time passed the weaknesses of the WPS agenda as it is constituted began to be slowly revealed, requiring innovative thinking about the future. This rich and comprehensive report attempts to deal with some of these gaps. One of the main critiques of the mainstream WPS agenda was that it aimed at universality but was dominated by northern voices. This volume captures the diversity of women's voices from around the world, especially from the global south, and the implications of that diversity for the normative framework and strategies for implementation. Pluralism, multiculturalism and intersectionality are core values of this report

Another critique of the mainstream WPS agenda is that it underplays the political economy of conflict focusing mainly on the successes of entrepreneurial women. This volume comes from a different place. It is concerned with issues such as land rights, migration and displacement from the viewpoint of the subaltern. The report emphasises the social and economic rights of women.

While the WPS agenda was initially directed at accountability for sexual violence through international justice mechanisms, this report explores multiple transitional mechanisms with a view to transformative justice at the local and national level. It searches for transitional justice and healing through local communities and innovative processes.

The report also treads new ground and studies the performance of masculinity and its relationship to violence in disparate settings. The recent backlash to the women's movement brings these issues of masculinity, militarisation and gender hierarchy to the fore. The decision to make this a central research theme brings great value to the report.

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of this report is its methodology. The Gender, Justice and Security Hub is an interdisciplinary, transnational research network of scholars working with local and global civil society. The diversity and connectivity of these interlocking networks is impressive. The report foregrounds the experience of women and marginalised groups. It accepts a feminist framework looking at issues of patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism and militarism and their gendered impact on women's everyday life in armed conflict situations. Operating in seven countries, the programme has sponsored 38 independent projects under research themes. The projects are participatory, collaborative and emphasise arts-based approaches. While being expansive in scope, they also seek to gather and preserve comprehensive data on the subjective matter being analysed.

The report, the projects and the research themes imagine radically transformed futures but are rooted in the actual daily lives of women as lived and experienced in the world today. They question existing orthodoxies and urge a respect for differences. They prioritise the voices of vulnerable and marginalied women. They insist on participation and democracy as an overarching framework. In this way, some of the best minds and practitioners working in the field of women, peace and security have come together to stake a claim for our future.

Foreword

Andrea Cornwall

It's a pleasure and a privilege to write this Foreword and to have been part of the extraordinary journey of the Gender, Justice and Security Hub over the last few years as Chair of the International Advisory Board. This rich, multi-stranded, pluri-vocal report well captures the diversity and complexity of the Hub's work. It offers powerful insights into how an international collaborative programme grounded in feminist principles navigated the challenging conditions for engaged, activist research on injustice at the global and local levels, from the COVID-19 pandemic and what UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called the 'shadow pandemic' of gender-based discrimination and violence that accompanied it and the global backlash against hard-won gains in women's and LGBTIQ+ rights, to national emergencies such as the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the devastating, long-term, local consequences of conflict and violence in the localities in which the programme worked.

A vast, ambitious initiative, the Gender, Justice and Security Hub brought together more than 150 people and 40 partner organisations, supporting 38 research projects, and producing more than 200 publications and research outputs, organised under six thematic areas in seven focus countries, as well as over a dozen others across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. Innovative in its use of arts-based and participatory approaches alongside the more conventional tools of qualitative and quantitative research, the Hub's research findings illuminates some of the deep structural obstacles to positive change in the lives of women and marginalised groups in conflict-affected areas, telling a global story of the indelible imprint of coloniality and the perverse effects of capitalism, of political unwillingness and policy impotence, of insufficiency in legal reform and institutional transformation, and at the root of it all, of the sheer intransigence of patriarchal structures and social norms. 'We are barely hanging on to the cliff edge of the radical world we envisaged when we commenced our work', the report comments; the worsening conjuncture could not have been anticipated at the outset, when the bold vision of a radically transformed, gender just future defined the Hub's collective work.

The Hub's work touched on issues that affect the lives of its members. Many of its members themselves experienced the pushback against women's rights and the impact of rising and unchecked homophobia and transphobia in their own lives and workplaces. Some were exposed through the research to situations in which they were placed in danger, and personally experienced the severity of backlash. There are important lessons from this for research initiatives and for funders, who may push for impact and for the fulfilment of initial plans for projects and outputs, insensitive to the very real risks and dangers researchers are placed in when local conditions change. Here again, the feminist principles on which the Hub was grounded created the conditions for 'extraordinary solidarity through multiple crises', in the words of one of the Hub members. These crises, in turn, called upon creativity in rethinking research projects and innovating to keep projects moving forward, which generated new and unexpected insights, including virtual interviews, webinars, conferences and conventions.

Alongside its incisive research findings, this report offers valuable lessons on putting feminist ethical principles into practice, serving in itself as a model for feminist research praxis. I'd like to highlight three of the most significant contributions in this regard. The first is the explicit set of feminist principles that were developed collaboratively at the outset and then tested and actively put to use numerous times throughout the project, as the Hub encountered extensive resistance and external shocks, including in the difficult decisions that had to be made when the Conservative UK government's decision to slash the aid budget forced the funder to make drastic budget cuts. The second is the emphasis in this report on anticipating, planning for and working with friction; part of the reality of complex, multi-disciplinary international collaboration that is so rarely acknowledged so openly and directly. As an example of this, the Hub was clear-sighted enough to draft, discuss and agree a protocol for the resolution of disputes at the very start of the programme. The report attests to the energy that went into creating a constructive conflict culture, described as 'a process of solidarity and loving accountability to ensure that friction is harnessed as a constructive force: a creative energy that illuminates challenges and reveals new possibilities'.

Third, and finally, I'd like to draw attention to the relational dimensions of the Hub, the 'potent and imperfect feminist web of relationships, collaborations, potentialities, points of friction and multi-directional exchanges of knowledge, practice and solidarity' that was created through the principles of a feminist ethics of care, responsibility and accountability, integrity, intellectual freedom and research independence, equality of respect and opportunity, collegiality and sustainability. This web-building doesn't just happen. It takes a serious investment of commitment, time, resources, attentiveness, emotional energy and care. In its account of the Hub's own story, this report offers a body of evidence that attests to a different kind of impact to the impressive lists of policy-relevant findings, publications and other outputs: on the researchers themselves, for whom the Hub opened up international as well as local partnerships, pathways and possibilities. The longer-term effects of these kinds of international collaborative projects have been under-studied and under-reported. But alongside its policy impacts and its contributions to knowledge, it is in this relational work, built with solidarity and care over these last five years, that perhaps the most important legacy of this impressive programme will lie.

Authors' Note

This Report is collectively authored by and belongs to the 150 UKRI GCRF Gender, Justice and Security Hub members listed below. It draws on a multi-year participatory process conducted with Hub members including in-person and online conventions, workshops, interviews and a wide range of written submissions. Collaborative knowledge production, co-authorship and collective acknowledgement are essential components of the Hub's feminist approach to researching gender, justice and security in conflict-affected areas.

Hub members William W. McInerney and Christine Chinkin have led the development and writing of the Report with key contributions from Kirsten Ainley. The Report was also made possible through countless hours of input from the outset of the process in its vision, writing, editing and support from the Hub team based at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Centre for Women, Peace and Security: Nicky Armstrong, George Byrne, Michelle Callander, Evelyn Pauls, and Julia Xavier Stier. The Hub Voices sections of the Report were co-edited by Choman Hardi, Christine and William. All illustrations, including the cover art, were created by Hayfaa Chalabi, and the Report was designed by Claire Harrison and her team at West9 Design. The Report is one component of a larger collection of research and outputs called the Story of the Hub, led by Nicky, Evelyn and William.

The collective authorship approach for this Report was approved by the Hub's Executive Group and a full draft of the text was circulated to Hub members for comment and approval before finalisation. Nevertheless, the Report does not present a single voice or perspective, nor was universal agreement the goal of this text. In an undertaking of this scale, it is evident that not all Hub members will agree on every point, finding or recommendation. The Report brings a multiplicity of ideas, disciplines, backgrounds, contexts and writing styles from across the Hub into conversation with one another. In so doing it reveals generative areas of resonance and dissonance, agreement and disagreement, within the Hub's individual and collective work and research.

It is therefore appropriate that when referring to or citing the Report, The UKRI GCRF Gender, Justice and Security Hub should be listed as the author. Some chapters, parts and features within the Report have been written by named individuals and should be cited as such in any reference to these specific Project Profiles (see lists of Hub Members who participated in each project), Stream Summaries (see lists of Co-Directors), Hub Voices (see individual authors), or Collective Output Project Spotlights (see lists of project members). Chapter One contains more information on the Report's methodology, including how different components of each chapter were developed and written.

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Inevitably during a project lasting over six years there have been some changes in Hub membership as people have both left the project and joined it. This list includes those Hub members who have been involved in the co-authorship of the Report.

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Women for Peace and Participation

Women's Legal Aid Iraq

Yakjah Peace and Reconciliation Network

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The Gender, Justice and Security Hub

> "
> Another world is not only possible, she's
> already on her way... on a quiet day I can hear
> her breathing. "
>
> ARUNDHATI ROY, *WAR TALK*, 2003.

The Gender, Justice and Security Hub addresses some of the world's most urgent injustices. Conflict and gender-based violence have devastating, long-term consequences on individuals, families and communities. They also severely hamper the successful delivery of development goals internationally. The Hub is an interdisciplinary, transnational research network working with local and global civil society, practitioners, governments and international organisations to address these challenges and advance the delivery of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality; SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions; and the implementation of the UN Security Council's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Through the creation of new knowledge and networks, including over 200 publications and research outputs, the Hub amplifies the voices of women and marginalised groups and drives local and global policy change and institutional reform.

The Hub includes of over 40 partner organisations, 38 research projects and 150 members around the world. Its novelty lies in its interdisciplinary ambition, its feminist framework, the breadth of comparative analysis it has generated and its vision of a holistic approach to considerations of gender equality and sustainable justice in and after conflict. The Hub is managed by an Executive Group of leading global scholars on gender justice, guided by a set of core feminist research ethics, and administered from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) Centre for Women, Peace and Security. It is one of twelve interdisciplinary research Hubs funded by the United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) through the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF).

Gender, Justice and Security: Structural Challenges, Feminist Innovations and Radical Futures is a synthesis of the Hub's key findings and recommendations at the thematic, project, country and Hub-wide levels. Collectively authored by Hub members, it highlights Hub-wide analysis and reflections, findings and recommendations from the streams and projects and individual Hub members' voices. It is divided into sections on Structural Challenges, Hub Research and New Ways Forward, each of which is summarised below. More information on the Hub and its members can be found on its website: www.TheGenderHub.com.

● Hub focus countries
○ Hub project countries

The Hub Report

Structural Challenges

The UN has developed extensive legal frameworks for advancing gender equality, justice and security, and states have accepted obligations, further amplified by the human rights treaty bodies and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. In addition, policy initiatives have been developed, including in the 21st century the SDGs and the WPS agenda, that should lead to gender justice and inclusive peace. Yet no country is on course to fulfil the SDGs and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has shown itself unable to implement its own WPS agenda in contemporary conflicts. Section One of the Report examines the structural obstacles that frustrate the achievement of meaningful improvements in the lives of women and marginalised groups in the conflict-affected contexts in which Hub research was conducted. The analysis sets out the ways in which patriarchy, capitalism, coloniality and militarisation operate together to shape the gendered landscape of conflict and crisis, creating a hostile environment for research such as that undertaken through the Hub, sustaining gender backlash and impeding progress toward gender, justice and security.

Hub Research Findings and Recommendations

Section Two of the Report explores the Hub's work in more depth and detail. The Hub's research was conducted through 38 independent projects under six research themes: Transformation and Empowerment; Livelihood, Land and Rights; Masculinities and Sexualities; Migration and Displacement; Law and Policy Frameworks; and Methodological Innovation. The projects worked in seven focus countries: Afghanistan, Colombia, Kurdistan-Iraq, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Uganda – as well as in over a dozen additional countries across Africa, South America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Chapter Three situates the Hub's work geographically by outlining the key challenges, findings and recommendations for each of the Hub's focus countries. Chapters Four to Nine outline the driving questions in each research stream then provide summaries of the topics, methods, findings and recommendations of all Hub projects within the streams. The key recommendations emerging from each stream are outlined below.

Gender, Justice and Security Hub Research Structure

RESEARCH STREAM	REPORT SECTION	PROJECT	COUNTRY CASES
Transformation and Empowerment	4.2	Addressing Post-Colonial Legacies in Transitional Justice	Colombia, Northern Ireland
	4.3	Culture and Conflict	Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
	4.4	Gender, Governance and Peacebuilding	Jordan, The Philippines, Sri Lanka
	4.5	Legacies of the Disappeared	Colombia, Sri Lanka
	4.6	Political Economy of Reconciliation	Colombia
	4.7	The Potentialities and Politics of Transformation	Sri Lanka
	4.8	Social and Economic Rights in Transition	Northern Ireland
	4.9	Women's Political and Economic Empowerment	Colombia
	4.10	Women's Rights after War	Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia, Iraq, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Rwanda
Livelihood, Land and Rights	5.2	Beyond War Compensation	Uganda
	5.3	Land Policy, Gender and Plural Legal Systems	Sierra Leone
	5.4	Land Reform, Peace and Informal Institutions	Colombia
	5.5	When Women Do Not Own Land	Sri Lanka

RESEARCH STREAM	REPORT SECTION	PROJECT	COUNTRY CASES
Masculinities and Sexualities	6.2	Changing SOGIE in Conflict, Peace and Displacement in the MENA Region	Lebanon, Turkey, Syria
	6.3	Cross-Border Wars, Sexuality and Citizenship	Uganda
	6.4	Men, Peace and Security	Cross-Cutting
	6.5	Sex, Love and War	Uganda
	6.6	Sexuality, Work and Gender Relations in Peacekeeping Missions	Bosnia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, South Sudan
	6.7	Transitional Masculinity, Violence and Prevention	Kurdistan-Iraq
Migration and Displacement	7.2	Gender and Forced Displacement	Afghanistan, Kurdistan-Iraq, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Turkey
	7.3	Gendered Dynamics of International Labour Migration	Kurdistan-Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Turkey
	7.4	Return, Reintegration and Political Restructuring	Afghanistan, Kurdistan-Iraq, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
Law and Policy Frameworks	8.2	Donor Funding and WPS Implementation	Colombia, Nepal, Northern Ireland
	8.3	Feminist Security Politics	Cross-Cutting
	8.4	Funding Transitional Justice	Cross-Cutting
	8.5	Gender and Conflict Transformation	Cross-Cutting
	8.6	Gender and Transitional Justice in Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka
Methodological Innovation	9.2	From Female Combatants to Filmmakers	Colombia, Uganda
	9.3	The Global Wellbeing and Resilience Index	Cross-Cutting
	9.4	Innovative Methodologies and Methodological Innovation	Cross-Cutting
	9.5	Narrating (In)Security	Sri Lanka
	9.6	Rights Research with Social Media	Cross-Cutting
	9.7	The Stories of Research	Cross-Cutting

TRANSFORMATION AND EMPOWERMENT

The focus of this stream is on exploring the concepts of 'transformative justice' and 'empowerment' within conflict-affected societies, aiming to understand who is being empowered and how, and the challenges faced by those seeking empowerment, both practically and institutionally, in multiple conflicted and post-conflict societies. Key findings and recommendations from the stream include:

- **Insufficient Women's Rights Reforms and Lack of Institutional Transformation:** Legal and political reforms and institutional changes addressing women's rights have been insufficient across conflict contexts and have failed to incorporate intersectional analyses.

- **Colonial Legacies in Transitional Justice:** Transitional justice mechanisms need to address colonial legacies, recognising their long-term structural impact on women's and men's engagement in various aspects of society.

- **Political Unwillingness to Implement Transitional Justice Mechanisms Poses Significant Challenges:** These mechanisms, integral to addressing historical injustices and fostering reconciliation, often face resistance due to the polarised environment created by political forces. As a result, the rights and remedies of victims remain unfulfilled, highlighting a critical obstacle to the effective implementation of transitional justice.

- **Complexities of Reconciliation:** Reconciliation in post-conflict societies is complex and multi-layered. Reconciliation efforts must consider factors such as age, gender and the type of victimisation experienced. Tailored measures aligned with diverse populations' expectations and needs are crucial.

- **Centrality of Women's Voices:** Women and their voices must be placed at the centre of transformations and interventions in post-war settings. Recognising women's agency and the importance of their participation in justice and security is essential, aligning with international agendas such as WPS and SDGs.

- **Use of Culture in Addressing Conflict Struggles:** Cultural endeavours can serve as a source of reparation, healing and empowerment for women, contributing to their economic empowerment and strengthening women's movements.

- **Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic:** Despite progress in research and practice, the COVID-19 pandemic represents a significant setback. It has shifted the trajectory for achieving gender equality, with national and international policies seemingly regressing rather than progressing.

LIVELIHOOD, LAND AND RIGHTS

This stream concentrates on the interplay between transitional justice, gendered power relations and socio-economic rights, particularly in relation to land and property. The research examines the unique challenges faced by women, who often emerge as heads of household post-conflict, yet struggle with property ownership and land access due to pre-existing discrimination and exclusion. Key findings and recommendations from the stream include:

- **Legal Pluralism and Implementation Gaps:** The coexistence of customary and general laws leads to gaps in implementation that disproportionately affect women. There is a need for legal reform, cultural transformation and increased awareness to ensure women's rights are upheld.

- **Role of Traditional and Informal Institutions:** Traditional and informal institutions have significant potential to mediate land disputes and support women's rights, especially in post-conflict settings, enhancing gender justice and social cohesion.

- **Challenges in Transitional Justice and Land Restitution:** Implementing transitional justice measures is complex, particularly in relation to land restitution. Stronger institutional frameworks and more transparent processes will help bridge the gap between law and practice.

- **Economic Empowerment and Social Wellbeing:** Land ownership is crucial for women's economic empowerment and overall wellbeing. Addressing barriers to land access and ownership is essential for advancing gender equality.

- **Patriarchal Structures and Cultural Norms:** Patriarchal structures and cultural norms have a significant impact on women's land rights. Efforts to transform these norms and promote gender equality in land governance are crucial.

- **Policy and Governance Reforms:** Policy and governance reforms and measures to engage women in decision-making processes are needed to ensure equitable land access.

- **Awareness and Advocacy:** Raising awareness and advocating for women's land rights through community engagement and dialogues with diverse actors is vital. This should be complemented by legal aid and support for women navigating land dispute resolution mechanisms.

MASCULINITIES AND SEXUALITIES

The Masculinities and Sexualities stream examines different perspectives on the constructions of masculinity, sexuality and violence, exploring the ways they evolve and are influenced by conflict and region. Key findings and recommendations from the stream include:

- **Reflection Through Dialogue and Focus Group Discussions:** Fostering community dialogue and focus group discussions is imperative in promoting reflection, critical thinking and evaluation of the social dynamics of violence, masculinity and gender-related issues.

- **Community Ownership:** It is important that solutions are developed within the community rather than through external contexts. More community-level conversations, led by local cultural and religious leaders, educators and activists, are needed on social norms and gender-based issues, as well as to work towards producing community-led solutions.

- **Empowerment Through Creative Expressions:** Using diverse creative methods, like poetry writing workshops and photo texts activities, have proven effective in encouraging self-expression, challenging stereotypes and aiding in reflection on social issues.

- **Capacity Building and Policy Change:** Collaboration with key government ministers for capacity building and policy recommendation can be effective ways of influencing systemic change and promoting gender sensitivity. However, it remains crucial to acknowledge the overwhelming reluctance within government agencies to accept and embrace change or adopt new approaches, often due to regulatory constraints and societal pressures.

- **Interdisciplinary Approach:** Examining social issues, such as gender and violence, through a multidisciplinary lens is crucial as it provides more accurate and dynamic insights into the root causes of deep problems. Additionally, fostering collaboration across disciplines serves to enrich perspectives and enhance the overall impact of each project while making sure duplicate efforts are eliminated.

- **Coordinated Responses:** Achieving gender equality is not the responsibility of NGOs and activists alone, and it will not be possible without the engagement of the larger community. An effective approach requires coordinated responses from the government, the NGO sector, funders and donors, the media and the broader community.

- **Impact of COVID-19:** The global pandemic increased gender-based violence against women and people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT
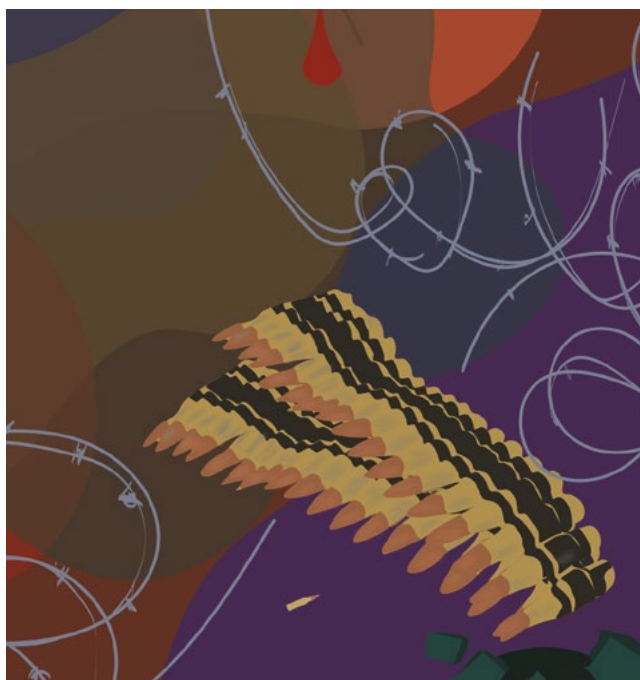
The projects in this stream analyse gendered aspects of different forms of internal and international displacement and migration in the Middle East and South Asia and make recommendations to develop policies addressing gendered issues that go beyond top-down discourses and initiatives at the international level and work with community groups and local organisations. Key findings and recommendations from the stream include:

- **Gender Disparity in Health and Education:** Across all contexts there are profound gender differences in health and education, and displaced groups lack access to clean water, sanitary living conditions and reproductive health.

- **Training and Communication:** There is a need for better training and communication of gender-inclusive policies at the international level to national and local governments, to improve awareness and understanding of the importance of gender analysis in forced displacement, returnee and migration policies.

- **Policy Implementation:** Gender-inclusive policies and training on forced displacement need to be better implemented at the national and local levels.

- **Motivation for Return Migration:** Factors driving return migration include poor living conditions, racism and discrimination (heightened during COVID-19) in the host country, and improved or stable conditions in the origin country, which can make return either feasible, profitable or both.

- **Lack of Return Policies and Assistance:** A lack of return migration policies and assistance constrains some migrants from returning to their homeland with limited opportunities in the labour market and access to housing and education.

- **Power of Recruitment Agencies:** Recruitment agencies have significant influence in facilitating migration and on the conditions faced by migrant women, particularly in countries with kafala systems such as Lebanon.

- **Inequality and Violence:** Women's agency in migration contexts is undermined by structural inequalities and violence that inhibits their ability to participate in labour markets.

- **Research Gaps:** More research is needed on the diversity of gendered migration in the Global South and greater efforts made to improve the living and working conditions of domestic workers who are not covered by standard labour laws. This should be done with community groups in order to better understand the lived experiences and distinct needs of migrant women in these contexts.

LAW AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

This stream focuses on local-international policy linkages, considering the impact of policies and practices promoted at the international level on states in the Global North as well as the Global South. Projects gather quantitative and qualitative data on the effects of donor policies, institutional structures, and funding patterns on transitional justice and WPS, and examine the record to date of transformative conflict resolution and gender-sensitive protection policies. Key findings and recommendations from the stream include:

- **Gender is Not an "Add On" (or a Synonym for Women):** In many cases gender perspectives are still side-lined, gender-disaggregated data is not prioritised and the assumption is that including women addresses the "gender dimension" of peace and justice processes.

- **Gendered Impacts of Policy:** Despite the apparent priority of gender justice and concern for the gendered implications of policy at the international level, too much domestic and international policy and practice still have deeply gendered impacts.

- **Language Matters:** It is important where possible to socialise policymakers to shared understandings of key concepts, such as 'justice', 'peacetime' and 'post-conflict', without losing a healthy scepticism regarding whether the 'policy ecosystem' of WPS can or should be aligned around such shared meanings.

- **Silence Also Matters:** Researchers should remain attentive to who is able to speak and be heard in policy discussions, what they choose to talk about and which people and topics are silenced.

- **Amplify Local Voices:** In conflict and conflict-affected settings, the organisations doing peace and justice work on the ground are knowledge-holders and should be valued as such. Power imbalances and funding shortages disproportionately impact local organisations, limit their access to decision-making spaces and privilege actors in the Global North.

- **The Local-National-Global Disconnect:** The domestic and international aspects of key policy frameworks are often not well-connected and local actors are not necessarily finding international frameworks such as the WPS agenda useful in their day-to-day work.

- **Accountable, Transparent and Participatory Funding:** International actors, particularly donors, have significant influence in justice and reconciliation work carried out post conflict, yet access to data on funding is poor.

METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATION
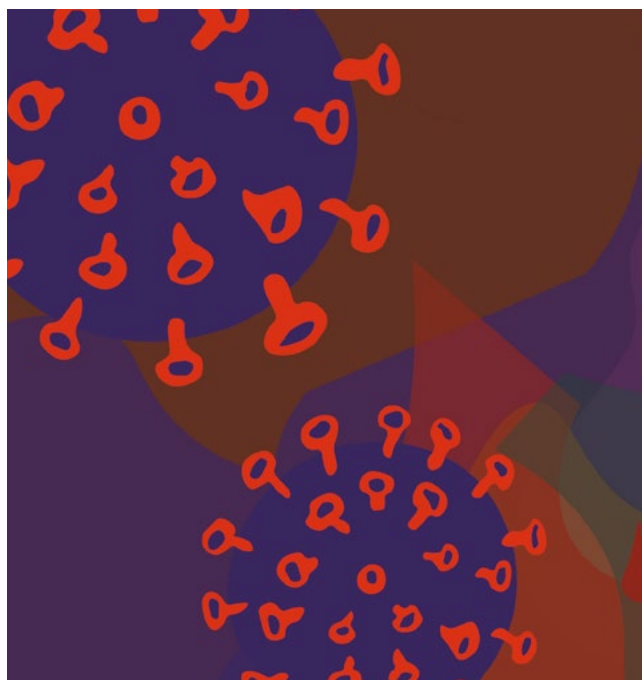
These projects aim to contribute to more resilient, equitable and peaceful societies through innovative methodological advancement. They develop feminist participatory and collaborative approaches that are adaptive to changing contexts while always adhering to strong ethical and safeguarding principles. Key findings and recommendations from the stream include:

- **Reflexivity and Relationality:** Reflexivity and relationality are critical to research in this field. Methodologies must be context-specific, conflict-sensitive, considerate and collaborative. Researchers should design and conduct studies in collaboration with the communities they seek to serve, recognising the collective nature of knowledge cultivation.

- **Impact of Crises on Research:** Crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, budget cuts and political upheavals test the resilience of research methodologies and ethical frameworks. Researchers must be prepared to adapt and respond to these challenges.

- **Innovative Methodologies:** The use of innovative methodologies, such as participatory filmmaking and arts-based approaches, or conducting online interviews with individuals who would not normally be able to participate in a research project, can enhance the impact and reach of research, fostering deeper engagement and understanding among diverse audiences.

- **Draw on Participatory and Arts-based Methods:** These methods should be mainstreamed in conflict-affected contexts to facilitate spaces for communities to share and process their experiences, contributing to more ethical and impactful research.

- **Enhance Data Collection Efforts:** Greater investment in data collection, particularly in fragile and low-income settings, is needed to address critical gaps and improve the assessment of societal wellbeing and resilience. Disaggregated data on sex, age and other key intersectional categories is urgently needed.

New Ways Forward

" Remember to imagine and craft the worlds you cannot live without, just as you dismantle the ones you cannot live within."

RUHA BENGAMIN, *IMAGINATION: A MANIFESTO*, 2024.

Section Three of the Report offers new ways forward for scholars, practitioners, law and policymakers and activists working towards gender justice and inclusive peace. Chapter Ten explores the Hub itself as a model for change – unpacking how its interdisciplinary, transnational and collaborative feminist praxis can support advances in addressing interdependent intractable challenges. The advantages, weaknesses, challenges and risks of the Hub's feminist model, practices and ethics are explored, with two strategies outlined to overcome the challenges identified: 1) weaving webs of holistic feminist research; and 2) anticipating and engaging friction. It is only when webs are built across disciplines, nation-state lines and academic-practitioner divides that networks like the Hub are able to confront the nexus of patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism and militarism.

Hub work demonstrates the value of a whole-of-research application of feminism, from design to dissemination. Feminist ethics combined with a pluralistic epistemological position created the space for feminism to show up in a multiplicity of places within the Hub – for the Hub itself to be akin to a web-weaving ecosystem. The experience of the Hub also underlines the importance of anticipating and engaging friction. Feminist researchers must plan for friction by investing in the development of a constructive conflict culture rooted in clear and collaboratively developed policies and support structures for addressing external threats and challenges as well as internal disagreements and disputes. Doing so requires a process of solidarity and loving accountability to ensure that friction is harnessed as a constructive force: a creative energy that illuminates challenges and reveals new possibilities.

Chapter 11 explores the Hub's overall vision and calls to action for a radically transformed future, characterised by gender-based rights; dignity; the absence of violence; economic, racial and decolonial justice; structural change; global movements for social change; strong laws and policies; inclusive peacebuilding; high levels of trust; equitable politics and the importance of hope. The Chapter sets out nine principles that emerged from the Hub's collective work that illuminate the path towards the futures we imagine. The principles are summarised below.

Hub-Wide Reflections and Recommendations

Listen More	**Keep Talking About Gender**	**Name the Structural Problems**
Weave Feminist Webs	**Anticipate and Engage Friction**	**Centre Activism**
Close Implementation Gaps and Fund the Work	**Incorporate the Arts and Culture**	**Expand, Connect and Communicate the Evidence Base**

1. Listen More

First and foremost, listen to those most affected by gender injustice and insecurity.

Centring the voices and lived experiences of women and marginalised groups must remain at the forefront of gender justice work. Further, there is a need to listen to a spectrum of perspectives beyond the bubbles of existing gender justice networks and allies. While listening alone is insufficient, it is an important conduit towards a more inclusive peacebuilding process that centres the expertise and experience of those most affected and that invites a broad coalition of stakeholders into the process of social change.

2. Keep Talking About Gender

Take gender seriously and keep bringing it up – personally, politically and professionally.

Talking about gender in contexts such as law and policymaking, research and activism can be disruptive, but such disruption is necessary and can be generative in bringing about social and political change. Talking about gender is particularly important amid the rise of sustained and severe anti-feminist movements where gender has become weaponised and critical discourse about patriarchy silenced, and when attention and resources are being diverted.

3. Name the Structural Problems

The problems of patriarchy, capitalism, coloniality and militarism must be named in the halls of power, because what goes unsaid all too often becomes uncontested and unquestioned.

Feminist scholarship has long advanced theoretical and practical insights on the ways in which language matters and how the stories we tell about social problems shape our social worlds and imaginaries; impacting the way we think and act. Addressing the intractable and interlocking structural violences of patriarchy, capitalism, coloniality and militarism requires both a grammar of gender justice and the political will to name this violence directly.

4. Weave Feminist Webs

The intractable challenges of patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism and militarism are interdependent and interlocking. Approaches to addressing them must be intersectional, synchronised and holistic.

Web weaving entails a focus on connecting – bringing multiple perspectives and approaches together through intersectional analysis, transnational partnerships, interdisciplinary methods and multi-sector collaborations with scholars, practitioners, activists and law and policymakers. It also points to the value of a holistic application of feminist thinking and practice at each step of the research process and the ways in which a feminist ethic of care and community building are key. There is significant work to be done engaging with donors and funding bodies to ensure lessons learned from the large-scale gender justice projects like the Hub can be replicated at various scales moving forward.

5. Anticipate and Engage Friction

Feminist research requires the mitigation and prevention of external threats and challenges as well as constructive engagement with internal tensions and contradictions.

Feminist researchers need to proactively anticipate and navigate external challenges and resistance. This includes investing time, funding and expertise in project and risk management, and analysing existing power dynamics and relationships between the projects, institutions, funders and communities most directly affected. Successful feminist research also entails engagement with internal challenges by centring a feminist ethic of care, focusing on the importance of relationships, navigating compromise and resistance with loving accountability, and developing a constructive conflict culture.

6. Centre Activism

Recognise and support feminist activism and place it at the heart of gender justice research, activism, law and policymaking.

Grassroots gender justice activism should be prioritised, funded and protected. Inclusive peacebuilding requires simultaneous top-down and bottom-up approaches to social change and it is imperative that the latter is not minimised or delegitimised. To do so requires investment in local, national and transnational community organising. Such roles must be seen as valued labour and as work that can be stable and sustainable for those involved.

7. Close Implementation Gaps and Fund the Work

Language matters, but action matters more.

While new laws and policies may be necessary in some areas, the full implementation of the existing legal and policy architecture, including the SDGs and WPS agenda, would significantly accelerate progress towards gender justice and inclusive peace. This requires more meaningful, sustainable and transparent funding. All too often the rhetoric of gender justice from those in power fails to become reality through concrete policy implementation and adequate funding. To realise gender justice and inclusive peace requires action, and action requires resources.

8. Incorporate the Arts and Culture

The arts and culture are vital components of gender justice and security work and should be meaningfully integrated into projects, campaigns and theories of change.

The arts and cultural practice should be seen as strategic components of gender justice work that can be used to engage diverse audiences, including creative professionals and broader publics. Artistic and cultural approaches can be context-responsive and multidimensional ways to educate, analyse, process, heal, connect, express, disseminate, seek justice, advance social change and envision new radically transformed futures. The arts are necessary, not just an accessory.

9. Expand, Connect and Communicate the Evidence Base

More feminist research is needed, along with more gender-disaggregated data, equitable knowledge exchange partnerships and research communication strategies that are both effective and affective.

More research is urgently needed to address a wide range of key questions that have emerged in the Hub's work, as well as the lack of gender-disaggregated data, lingering gaps in the academic literature and emergent social, political and technological challenges. More work is additionally required to better connect existing knowledge, breaking down disciplinary silos and scholar-practitioner divides and to communicate knowledge effectively and affectively to diverse stakeholders.

Country-Specific Calls to Action

Putting the Hub's nine principles to work to bring radical, material change requires concrete action in conflict-affected societies and beyond. The findings of the Hub's projects as they relate to the research focus countries and the recommendations that follow from them are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 and summarised below.

AFGHANISTAN

Prior to the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, the key findings in projects working on Afghanistan focus on physical and economic insecurity and the ways in which women and marginalised groups continue to generate both livelihoods and community in the face of crises. The projects also document the multiple gendered impacts of displacement for the Afghan population in terms of health, social isolation, legal status and access to education and employment. However, under Taliban control, many of these recommendations cannot realistically be implemented due to the regime's draconian policies regarding women's rights and participation in public life. They are shared here nonetheless, to provide a framework for future advocacy, document the work done and to keep highlighting women's advocacy before and now.

Recommendations

Recommendations up to August 2021

Government of Afghanistan:

- **Economic Empowerment:** Develop and support programmes for the economic empowerment of displaced women, particularly in the craft sector.

- **Educational Programmes:** Implement policies and programmes to prevent early marriage and promote girls' education.

- **Reduce Discrimination in Education:** Review and amend community education policy and practices to combat discrimination based on gender, ethnicity and language.

- **Mental Health Services:** Establish mental health services that are accessible to displaced populations, with a focus on addressing the unique stressors for these communities and to women and girls in them.

UN Agencies, International NGOs and Humanitarian Actors:

- **Women's Health:** Prioritise women's health initiatives, including antenatal and reproductive health services.

- **Basic Needs and Sanitation:** Advocate for and provide access to clean water, sanitation facilities and food security to mitigate health crises.

- **Peace and Reconciliation Advocacy:** Advocate for peace processes in Afghanistan, especially focusing on women's inclusion, while encouraging engagement with Afghan people who have existing relevant skills and experience.

- **Awareness of Rights and Access to Justice:** Raise awareness and improve understanding of women's rights and refugee rights and provide support in seeking access to them.

International Community and Host Countries:

- **Support for Afghan Migrants and Returnees:** Assist Afghan returnees and migrants in terms of job placement, social integration and addressing poverty.

- **Skill Utilisation:** Identify and utilise the skills and qualifications of Afghan experts, particularly those who have been displaced, to contribute positively to their host communities and homeland.

- **Legal Protection for Migrants:** Strengthen legal protections for Afghan migrants, especially for women, and facilitate their integration and access to public services.

Recommendations after August 2021

External Governments, International NGOs and Organisations:

- **Engage, Organise and Mobilise Afghan Experts Inside Afghanistan and Across the Diaspora:** To support Afghans, in their homeland and in the region, the UN, host countries for refugees and organisations from the Afghan diaspora need to develop policies to identify Afghan experts and determine how to best utilise their social, human, cultural and economic capital.

- **Exert Leverage to Catalyse the Stalled Peace Process:** The international community needs to use whatever leverage it has over the Taliban to pressure them to begin the stalled peace process and reconciliation with all facets of the society, including women.

- **Shift the Narrative to Focus on and Support Work that is Still Possible:** In the current situation, opportunities for women to draw on their skills to produce financial value still exist. Despite deep and sustained attacks on women's rights, security and livelihoods, women continue to work, especially in modes that allow them to stay inside the home. To bolster this work, trade routes between Afghanistan and Pakistan are vital. International organisations should be working to maintain these trade routes to enable goods, such as craft products, to leave the country to generate income. NGOs should continue to support work that enables women to generate an income.

- **Include and Advocate for the Inclusion of Women in Political Processes:** Afghan women risk being erased from the ongoing dialogues about the future of their nation that are being held by the international community. A possible recognition of the Taliban in the coming years will make this erasure a large price that future generations of women might pay. All donors and policymakers should maintain the equality of all genders at the heart of their advocacy and policy.

- **Crisis Responses are Gender Blind and Need to be Aware of Intersectional Inequalities.** The crisis of 2021 made it clear that gender blind policies of protection, including evacuation and access to humanitarian visas and related safety, were gender blind. Related resettlement programmes also showed a lack of awareness of intersectional inequalities in Afghanistan. The Hub's Gender Intersectionality Crisis Toolkit addresses this gap in understanding and should be utilised and adapted in other contexts.

COLOMBIA

Projects working on Colombia examine the impact of various aspects of the peace and reconciliation process. The projects explore the limits to women's political and economic empowerment in the country, the disparities between the symbolic reparations offered by transitional justice institutions and the material reparations needed by communities, the challenges of reintegration and the long-term legacies of colonialism. They found that the land restitution process is often slow and flawed and that there has been a concerning decline in international funding for and attention to women's rights, empowerment and gender equality.

Recommendations

Government of Colombia:

- **Responsive Reconciliation Policies:** Create reconciliation programmes that recognise and incorporate the complexities of individual experiences of conflict, focusing on providing targeted material reparations alongside symbolic acts.

- **Economic Justice for Rural Women:** Enhance support systems for rural women, such as education and land rights, to address economic disparities and promote gender equality.

- **Transparent and Efficient Land Restitution:** Review and reform the land restitution process with a focus on transparency and efficiency, ensuring legal consistency and victim-centred outcomes.

- **Intersectional Approach to Justice Institutions:**
  The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), Victim's Unit and
  the Monitoring Committee of The Commission for the
  Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-repetition
  (CEV) should prioritise an intersectional approach in their
  work wherever possible to fully understand the situation of
  particularly vulnerable people and provide appropriate
  mechanisms for redress.

- **Colonial Roots of Inequitable Justice:** When evaluating
  the implementation of the 74 final recommendations made
  by the CEV, the Monitoring Committee should consider the
  background of colonial legacies and structural constraints
  on reconciliation.

- **Local Leadership and Intercultural Education:** The
  voices of Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities
  must be centred in the transitional justice process. Integrate
  local leaders in policy design and execution to ensure that
  programmes align with the specific needs and expectations
  of their communities.

- **Reconciliation Expectations:** Conduct a national
  dialogue to clarify and define reconciliation, its scope and
  its limits to ensure there is a unified and realistic expectation
  from the process.

Civil Society and International Actors:

- **Sustainable and Flexible Funding Models:** Develop
  funding models that provide long-term support for women-
  led civil society organisations (CSOs), allowing for the
  continuation and scaling of successful programmes and for
  resources to be allocated in ways that respond to changing
  context and needs.

- **Meaningful and Diverse Participation:** Ensure the
  participation of a diversity of women's groups – including
  female ex-combatants, victims, Indigenous groups – in
  all aspects of peace implementation, from disarmament,
  demobilisation and reintegration to land rights, economic
  opportunity and transitional justice.

- **Capacity Building for Grassroots Organisations:**
  Allocate resources enhance the ability of marginalised
  groups and grassroots organisations to respond to
  community-specific needs with cultural competence and
  local knowledge. Funding should be made available to
  smaller and more informal organisation and guaranteed for
  gender issues throughout the peace implementation process.

- **Intersectional and Holistic Gender Programming:**
  Avoid single-issue approaches to gender advocacy, which
  can perpetuate existing social and political hierarchies.
  Focus on violence perpetuated by interlinked structures of
  oppression experienced by minoritised women and groups.

- **Colonial Influences on Transitional Justice:** Research
  that seeks to address historical colonialism should itself take
  a decolonial methodological approach and engage with
  Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

KURDISTAN-IRAQ

Hub research on Kurdistan-Iraq exposes the barriers to progress faced by women due to failures in the political and legal systems, deep-rooted patriarchy and gender backlash including high levels of harassment of women's rights activists. These projects also demonstrate the misalignment between international policies and local realities in terms of both the discourse and practice of managing displaced populations and highlight the contributions that returnee migrants to the country make to peace, development, gender equality and the labour market.

Recommendations

Regional Government of Kurdistan-Iraq:

- **Engaging Men and Challenging Patriarchal Norms:** Increase funding and resources for local initiatives that focus on engaging men, specifically regarding those in positions of power, to challenge patriarchal norms and resist the growing gender backlash.

- **Viable and Sustainable Policies for Returnees:** Develop sustainable and viable policies with the aim of encouraging highly skilled men and women to return to Kurdistan and contribute to economic development and peace.

- **Engaging with Diaspora:** Establish a Diaspora Affairs Department to engage with and benefit from the human, cultural, social and economic capital of the Kurdish diaspora; identify evidence of labour shortages, build networks of potential returnees and assess their potential contribution to sustainable development.

- **Focusing on the Rights and Contributions of Women Returnees:** Work with non-governmental partners to establish and implement policies to develop positive policies for women and to benefit from the skills of women returnees.

International Actors:

- **Implement Gender-Inclusive Policies:** Work with regional and local actors to develop and implement displacement policies that account for gender-specific needs and challenges, with a focus on empowerment and skill acquisition for displaced women and girls.

- **Gender-Sensitive Training on Forced Displacement:** Support and facilitate training programmes at the national and local levels to ensure a deep understanding of gender issues in displacement contexts, aiding in the creation of more effective support systems.

Local Communities and Educators:

- **Community-Led Solutions:** Empower local leaders and educators to spearhead discussions on gender norms and establish community-driven responses to address these issues effectively.

- **Education as a Tool for Change:** Integrate comprehensive gender equality education into curriculums at schools, mosques and other learning platforms. Focus on engaging younger generations to shape future societal norms and engaging men to highlight the positive role they can play as gender equality allies within the community.

- **Arts-Based Approaches:** Implement creative and arts-based methods in educational settings to foster empathy, challenge established gender norms and promote a re-evaluation of gender identities.

Media, Funders and the General Public:

- **Coordinated Multi-Actor Approaches:** Coordinate responses from the government, the NGO sector, funders and donors, the media and the larger community to achieve gender equality.

LEBANON

Projects on Lebanon find that the triple crises that the country has recently experienced (the economic downturn, Beirut port explosion and COVID-19 pandemic) compounded the ostracisation, harassment and discrimination of persons of diverse SOGIESC, in particular undocumented Syrian refugees, and noted the scarcity of psychosocial support for these communities. The triple crisis also disproportionately affects migrant women, exacerbating their vulnerabilities and leading to increased unemployment, isolation, incidents of gender-based violence and an increased risk of human trafficking.

Recommendations

Government of Lebanon:

- **Abolish Discriminatory Laws and Strengthen Legal Protections:** Article 534 in the Penal Code criminalises homosexual acts. This, and other laws that criminalise sex workers, should be abolished.

- **Enhance Legal Protections for Migrant Women:** The Lebanese government should enact and enforce laws that safeguard migrant women in both public and private spheres, offering them security and justice.

Policymakers and Lebanese NGOs:

- **Adopt an Intersectional Approach:** Lebanese policymakers and NGOs should embrace an intersectional lens to understand the complexities of SOGIESC identities, to bring about policies and support services that cater to their specific needs.

- **Support Transnational Activism:** Encourage and facilitate transnational activism and collaboration among SOGIESC organisations across the region to strengthen the resilience and effectiveness of the SOGIESC movement in Lebanon and beyond.

- **Increase Sustainable Funding:** Lebanon urgently needs to increase sustainable funding for SOGIESC-focused services, especially in mental health and psychosocial support.

Government, NGOs, and International Organisations:

- **Reform the Kafala System:** The Lebanese government, with support from international bodies, must urgently overhaul the kafala system to protect domestic workers' rights.

- **Advance Migrant Rights and Safety:** A coordinated approach involving the Lebanese government, NGOs and international organisations should be implemented to create a more inclusive, safe and supportive environment for female migrants.

- **Support Migrant-Centred Programmes:** The Lebanese government should collaborate with NGOs on programmes that offer job training, legal assistance and social support to migrant communities.

Governments of Migrant Workers' Country of Origin:

- **Bilateral Migration Agreements:** The governments of migrant domestic workers' country of origin are called to take action and negotiate bilateral agreements with the Lebanese government to provide fairer conditions for their migrant citizens.

SIERRA LEONE

A focus on land justice in Sierra Leone shows that poverty is the main factor limiting access to land, followed by being a migrant or non-local in a community. This disproportionately affects women who face cultural patriarchal norms restricting their tenurial rights to land. Further, corporate actors are taking advantage of the liberalisation of the Sierra Leonean economy to deny access to land and to dispossess women. Economic development is being prioritised over social justice and women's empowerment, inhibiting efforts to establish long-term gender justice and inclusive peace.

Recommendations

Government of Sierra Leone:

- **Policy Reform and Implementation:** Legal and policy reform guaranteeing equal ownership and access to land for women needs to be strengthened and fully implemented.

- **Land Policy and Inclusivity:** Review and update existing land policy to incorporate the progressive provisions outlined in the National Land Commission Act (2022) and the Customary Land Rights Act (2022). This should be accompanied by the development of a comprehensive land law.

- **Women's Rights and Corporate Interests:** Protect the rights of women when they conflict with corporate land interests. This includes closing legal loopholes that allow women's rights, including land rights, to be compromised in the name of development.

- **Civil Society and Local Organisations:** Support civil society and local organisations working on the ground including through funding and engagement.

Traditional Authorities:

- **Customary Law and Gender Equality:** The institution of chieftaincy should be reformed, focusing on equal representation and participation of women in chiefdom decision making, including in committees set up to manage land and land resources.

Civil Society Organisations and NGOs:

- **Land Justice and Non-State Actors:** Paralegal and dispute resolution assistance to women should be enhanced so that women can be fairly represented in land deals and have access to justice when their rights are violated. Education and information sharing about new laws and policies should also be prioritised.

SRI LANKA

Photo Credit: Fredrik Öhlander on Unsplash

Research on Sri Lanka concentrates on issues of justice, land and migration. Projects find that there are significant shortcomings in justice for families of the disappeared and for victim-survivors of sexual and gender-based violence as well as a general systemic shortfall in access to justice for women. On land, Hub research shows that women's land ownership is affected by the absence of a uniform law for land rights, the complexities in customary laws, ethnoreligious and cultural norms and the impact of war. Internally displaced people in Sri Lanka have limited access to economic and livelihood opportunities and cannot meet basic healthcare needs, and women returnee migrants face significant discrimination and challenges.

Recommendations

Government of Sri Lanka:

- **Justice for the Disappeared:** Prioritise disappearance cases and investigate what happened in these cases to restore faith in the OMP.

- **Housing and Restitution for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** Increase the current land and housing grants to IDPs in line with inflation. Continue and expand work on documenting the experiences of IDPs to inform policies of protection and assistance in resettlement and relocation.

- **Justice for Victim-Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV):** Include a legal definition of CRSV in the substantive law. Review legal standards on consent and corroboration in cases of CRSV and recognise the impact of trauma on witness statements. Guarantee the participatory rights of victims in court.

- **Victim-Survivor Support in CRSV:** Institute mandatory and robust training of police officers and judicial medical officers in CRSV cases and trauma to ensure gender sensitivity and the protection of the dignity and rights of the victim-survivor.

- **Existing Laws Need to be Further Amended and Properly Implemented to Allow Women to have Greater Access to, and Full Control of, Land:** The government administrators should ensure that the recent amendments to laws (i.e. Land Development Ordinance) are honoured in practice and that women are given more space for decision-making in matters of land utilisation.

- **Encouraging Return Migration:** Develop and implement policies to attract and integrate highly skilled returnees, recognising their potential to contribute to economic development and peace.

- **Integrated Dialogue for Future Peace and Economic Stability:** Incorporate discussions on identity and culture into peace and economic dialogues. Arts-based practices and research offer unique insights that can guide policymaking.

International Community:

- **Gender-Inclusive Policies:** Support the development, implementation and communication of gender-inclusive policies from the international to the local level.

- **Centre Marginalised Women in Gender Policy:** Existing policies that are intended to better integrate women into systems of power need to be refocused so that they centre marginalised communities and address the systemic issues that subject these communities to harm and violence.

- **Office of Missing Persons (OMP) Accountability:** It is imperative that international actors support the efforts of families of the disappeared and sustain pressure on the Sri Lankan state to investigate cases of forcibly disappeared and missing persons through the OMP.

- **International Engagement of Sri Lankan Diaspora:** Engage and mobilise experts within the diaspora, focusing on gender justice and inclusive peace.

- **Supporting Participatory and Arts-Based Methods:** Recognise and financially support arts-based research methodologies for their unique contributions to data collection, learning and dissemination.

UGANDA

Projects working on Uganda provide a broad range of findings on the country's experience post conflict. Female ex-combatants, 'floating populations', the 'temporary families' of soldiers and women returnees and their children continue to face severe marginalisation, leading to stigmatisation, economic struggles and social challenges. The patrilineal land ownership system creates significant challenges for all women, particularly female ex-combatants and their children, leading to disputes over land rights and insecurity. Female ex-combatants face inadequate long-term health support and neglect in reintegration programmes, impacting their successful reintegration into society. Extended conflicts and displacements have significantly disrupted intimate relationships, kinship systems and traditional practices, leading to intergenerational conflicts and severe mental health issues in affected populations.

Recommendations

Government and Policymakers:

- **Government Engagement and Support:** Engage continuously and offer robust support to marginalised communities and floating populations, including women returnees and children born in conflict, to address issues of stigmatisation, violence and social integration.

- **Simplification of Legal Processes:** Streamline legal documentation processes for people lacking parental or birthplace information, enabling better access to government services and legal rights, particularly for children born in captivity.

- **Land Reform and Community Trust:** Address land conflicts and challenges from land commercialisation by reinforcing community trust, facilitating the adaptation of traditional land and kinship systems, and ensuring fair land access for all, especially women and children affected by conflict.

- **Military Strategy and Deployment Policies:** Redefine military strategies to emphasise peaceful conflict resolution and limit the duration and frequency of deployments to prevent the formation of temporary families and improve soldier well-being.

International Organisations and NGOs:

- **Role of International Actors:** Actively work with a wide range of actors to combat stigmatisation and discrimination against people formerly associated with armed groups, focusing on the specific needs and contexts of the affected populations.

Communities and Cultural Institutions:

- **Prioritise Post-War Social Identity:** Develop programmes to support social connectedness, encourage intergenerational dialogue and foster collective identity within communities.

Media and Communication Sectors:

- **Effective Community Outreach:** Make use of radio and other media as tools for community outreach and public debate, especially in rural, war-impacted areas, to bridge divides and to amplify marginalised voices across various demographic lines.

Healthcare and Social Services:

- **Long-term Health and Reintegration Programmes:** Develop and implement comprehensive and intentional reintegration programmes that address the long-term physical, mental and social impacts of conflict on ex-combatants.

The Gender, Justice and Security Hub

1.1 The Hub

What is the Gender, Justice and Security Hub? In simple terms it is a multi-partner, multi-disciplinary, collaborative research project, which has been based at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) Centre for Women Peace and Security between March 2019 and September 2024.[1] It is one of twelve research Hubs created by the United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) in what they termed an 'ambitious new approach to tackling some of the world's most pressing challenges … the scale and scope of which are a first.' The twelve research Hubs were designed to confront acute global challenges that have proved resistant to change and to resolution by any single organisation, discipline or country.

The challenges identified by the Gender, Justice and Security Hub (referred to in this text as the Hub) arise from a lack of progress toward achieving the United Nations General Assembly's (UNGA) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),[2] in particular SDG 5 on Gender Equality and SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions in conjunction with the UN Security Council's (UNSC) agenda on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The latter was commenced by UNSC resolution 1325, adopted on 31 October 2000, and has been pursued through nine further resolutions. Resolution 1325 recognised the differential impact of armed conflict on women and men, drew attention to the 'inextricable links between gender equality and international peace and security',[3] and stressed the 'important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building'.[4] The SDGs and WPS agenda seek to tackle a major barrier to human development and security;

their intractability lies in large part in the scale and complexity of gender inequality across diverse contexts, exacerbated by strong resistance to change from vested interests.

The Hub advances knowledge production, exchange and advocacy through a collection of 38 independent feminist research projects involving 150 Hub members who work at more than 40 partner organisations exploring issues of gender, justice and inclusive peace[5] in conflict-affected areas. Its origins lie in two former GCRF-funded Strategic Networks on 'Gender Violence Across War and Peace' and 'Justice, Conflict and Development' and a project on 'The Value of Culture in Conflict', all of which fostered research, learning and advocacy through partnerships across the Global South and North.[6] Researchers from these three earlier projects and networks worked in collaboration with new researchers, to develop a proposal for the Hub. This proposal built on their previous work, identifying new research questions and objectives, and designing new projects, work plans and budgets. A key priority that emerged was the importance of implementing a feminist research ethic that could foster equitable Global South and North partnerships while supporting research projects to evolve organically based on local community needs and interests, rather than being imposed by a central leadership team.

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Hub focus countries

- Kurdistan-Iraq
- Lebanon
- Afghanistan
- Sierra Leone
- Uganda
- Colombia
- Sri Lanka

The Hub's projects are located primarily in seven focus countries (Afghanistan, Colombia, Kurdistan-Iraq, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Uganda), as well as in more than a dozen additional countries worldwide. The Hub is organised into six research streams (Transformation and Empowerment; Livelihood, Land and Rights; Masculinities and Sexualities; Migration and Displacement; Law and Policy Frameworks; and Methodological Innovation). Each stream includes a collection of research projects working across multiple geographies and disciplines. Two Hub Co-Directors were allocated to each stream, one from a partner institution in the Global South and one from a partner institution in the Global North, where feasilble.[7] The Hub's collective work was guided throughout by the objectives of amplifying the voices of women and marginalised groups, advancing the gender justice evidence-base, building networks, capacity building, and, more broadly, advancing gender justice and inclusive peace. Hub members include academic researchers, local, regional and global civil society, activists, and practitioners. The Hub's novelty lies in its interdisciplinary ambition, its feminist framework, the breadth of comparative analysis it has generated, and its vision of a holistic approach to considerations of gender equality and sustainable justice in and after conflict.

From its inception and throughout the more than five-year life of the Hub, our members have faced many daunting challenges. Some of these have derived from the feminist vision that was made central to its governance structures, guiding ethical principles[8] and methodologies, while others flowed from the need to maintain regular communications across the focus countries: researchers carried out their work in different contexts, time zones, languages and cultures, having to respond to the demands made of them from their institutions and communities while sustaining their commitment to the Hub. But external factors have been the most challenging to the Hub's work, notably swingeing budgetary cuts made by the funder in early 2021 and the restoration of the budget after an unscheduled review process in 2022 and the global COVID-19 pandemic.[9] Many Hub members faced further local crises and emergencies, such as targeted instances of gender backlash in response to Hub research and the return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan in 2021. In many ways the story of the Hub has been one of responding to emerging crises, firefighting and frustrations. Yet, it has also been one of great collegiality, solidarity and satisfaction, which emerged out of sharing in an exciting and novel research enterprise. This Report seeks to capture and convey the essence of the Gender, Justice and Security Hub, to make recommendations for scholars, activists, practitioners and policy and lawmakers, and to offer some insights for others undertaking large-scale, collaborative feminist research projects.

1.2 The Story of the Hub

This Report is a part of the Story of the Hub, a multi-year participatory process that documents the work of the Hub in digital and print formats and through individual and collaborative outputs. It consists of three main components: the Hub's website, Collective Outputs Projects and this Report.
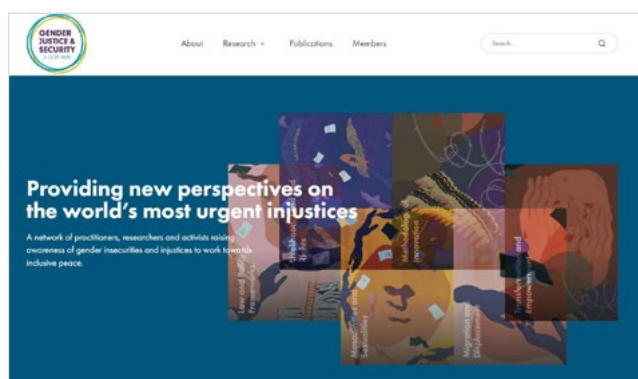
The Gender, Justice and Security website

The Hub Website and Digital Project Stories

www.TheGenderHub.com provides an immersive digital archive of the Hub's projects, access to its research outputs and biographies of all Hub members. Each project is documented on the website through multi-media rich 'scrollytelling' narratives that share the research findings and recommendations through text, images, audio, and video. With its roots in long-form journalism, scrollytelling is a story that unfolds by scrolling the mouse down a website page. Each scroll reveals new information, a new visual, a new audio clip, a new finding, a new recommendation. This technique creates space for narratives to rise and fall, appear and disappear, grow and shrink. It allows projects to be navigated at a different pace, with evidence-based findings, relational forms of knowledge and emotional engagements co-existing and emerging as complementary ways of understanding the Hub.

Collective Output Projects

In 2023, the Hub developed five Collective Output Projects, bringing together researchers from across multiple projects and streams to collaboratively examine common themes emerging from Hub work. These projects consider cross-cutting issues including:

- the impact of COVID-19;

- the relationship between gender, land, and political economies;

- the perspectives of Global South and early career researchers and practitioners on international feminist research practice;

- the Hub's approach to feminist practice, knowledge production, and the ethics of working in conflict-affected areas; and

- the curation and dissemination of Hub research outputs in a physical and digital resources centre.

These additional projects have generated a wide variety of outputs – data visualisations, research papers and briefs, conference panels, seminars and conversation circles, a podcast series, and a resource centre – which have added to the richness of the Story of the Hub and are documented below in the Report.

Hub Report

Gender, Justice and Security: Structural Challenges, Feminist Innovations and Radical Futures is a synthesis of the Hub's key findings and recommendations at the country, thematic, project, and Hub-wide level. It highlights both individual Hub members' voices and Hub-wide analysis and reflection. Collectively authored by Hub members, the Report is informed by the Hub's 200+ research outputs, Hub-wide workshops and interviews with researchers from each project. In addition to sharing research findings, the Report critically reflects on the Hub's large-scale feminist approach to transnational, interdisciplinary, multi-partner research and examines its vision for a radically transformed future. By documenting the Hub's extensive contributions, the Report aims to influence law and policy, support practice and activism, and expand the evidence base on gender justice and inclusive peace in conflict-affected contexts.

Taken together, these three Story of the Hub components share the depth and breadth of five years of research, writing and reflection in ways that honour the work and voices of Hub members. They seek to engage diverse scholarly, practitioner, activist, and law and policymaking audiences. By documenting the wealth of individual and collective contributions made to knowledge and practice, the Story of the Hub creates a living legacy of the Hub through free and accessible resources that can continue to inform, equip, and inspire action for advancing gender, justice and security.

1.3 Report Methodology

The methodology for this Report is informed by the Hub's feminist ethics, which emphasise the value of participatory approaches, knowledge co-production and collaborative authorship. It draws on the multi-year Story of the Hub process. Specifically, Sections One and Three of the Report are informed by a series of in-person and online workshops at Hub Conventions and Section Two is drawn from interviews with researchers from each project.

Hub Conventions and Workshops

A key challenge for the Hub as a whole was how to create and maintain a distinct Hub identity and research agenda out of its diverse and disparate constituent parts, separated geographically and culturally, and across methodological and disciplinary boundaries. The vision for achieving this included holding Conventions in the focus countries, which would provide opportunities for Hub members[11] to engage with one another across projects and streams, exhibit their work, develop collective proposals, and share ideas, findings, problems confronted, and solutions sought. In addition, through meetings with local academic and activist communities, and attending exhibitions and places of historical or other significance, individual members and the Hub as a whole could gain insights into the focus country contexts. The first Hub Convention was held in Sri Lanka in early 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic meant the 2021 Conventions were held online. A second in-person Convention was convened in May 2022 in Northern Ireland and the third in 2023 in Colombia. Especially important at the Colombia Convention was the highly active role of the Hub's Early Career Network (ECN) whose members also held their own conference in Bogotá immediately before the Convention.[12] It featured a series of workshops focused on the specific challenges and opportunities for early career Hub members and those located in the Global South. Organising Conventions was complex, time consuming and stressful and the Hub owes a great debt of gratitude to the local and London-based teams that made them happen.[13]

Among their other benefits the Conventions provided valuable time and space for working toward a Report that would be an inclusive record of the Hub's five-year existence – its vision, its research, its disappointments – and thus would contribute to its legacy. The decision was accordingly made that the Report would be a shared endeavour, co-written by all Hub members, with opportunities for all to voice their thoughts and opinions.

This process commenced at the Convention in Belfast with five workshops where members were invited to work together in groups to identify common Hub themes, compare research findings and develop ideas for what ultimately became this Report. Two additional online workshops were hosted after the Convention to allow Hub members who were not able to attend in person to contribute to the collective process. These workshops were also pivotal in developing the five Collective Output Projects which started in early 2023.

Common themes developed by Hub members at Northern Ireland Convention

Work continued at the Colombia Convention in mid-2023 with five further working sessions. The first was an overview of what had emerged in Belfast and a general discussion. In the following workshops participants were asked more targeted questions: about the structural obstacles to the Hub's objectives that had been identified in Belfast (patriarchy, capitalism and colonialism) and how these had impacted on their projects; about their conception of the Hub and its feminist ethics; their ideas for radical futures; and, in the final session, their individual reflections on the Hub. An additional online workshop was held in late 2023 to provide an overview of what came out of the sessions and to gather insights from Hub members who could not attend in-person events. The workshops produced an extraordinarily rich diversity of views, quotes, drawings and reflections that were transcribed, totalling more than 15,000 words. This text was thematically analysed[14] and shared with members for further input in two additional online workshops. During these sessions Hub members discussed the findings, refined the themes, added recommendations and clarified key ideas. Insights from this multi-step analysis form the basis of Chapters Two, Ten and Eleven.

Research Project Interviews

Semi-structured online interviews were conducted with a member of each Hub research project team in late 2023 and early 2024.[15] The interviews explored the projects' research questions, findings and recommendations as well as providing an open space for the Hub researchers to discuss their experiences and overall reflections on the Hub. The Story of the Hub team then worked with each research project team to collaboratively develop a project profile for the Report and a digital project story for the Hub's website.

The Report is the outcome of the collaborative processes described above. The full draft was designed and put together by members of the Story of the Hub and London-based teams and submitted to all Hub members for comment and approval before publication.

1.4 Report Structure

The Report is divided into three sections and eleven chapters.

Section One discusses why the challenges the Hub addresses remain so difficult to overcome. It examines patriarchy, capitalism, coloniality, racism and militarism as interlocking forms of structural violence that have been exacerbated by a series of compounding contemporary crises, which include the COVID-19 pandemic, austerity, regional and country-specific conflicts, and the global backlash to gender, to human rights and to the rule of law. It thus contextualises the Hub's research projects and foregrounds the centrality of an intersectional and structural analysis of inequalities, violence and crisis in gender, justice and security research, practice, law and policymaking, and activism.

Section Two is the core of the Report. It provides an overview of the Hub's complexity and coverage, beginning with briefs for each of the Hub's seven focus countries that outline the conflict context, the key challenges each faces and a brief overview of the Hub's work in-country. These lay the foundations for the synthesised findings and country-specific recommendations that are set out in Section Three of the Report. Following the country briefs are project summaries, which include the findings and recommendations from each of the Hub's research projects. These are grouped by thematic structure, which is underpinned by the Hub's six research streams. The Hub Co-Directors introduce each thematic chapter, summarising the underlying questions and problems explored by the projects within their stream and describing the contribution of the stream projects to the Hub's overall conclusions and recommendations. By bringing together geographic, thematic, and project level analysis, Section Two presents an encyclopaedic overview of the Hub's innovative research and provides cutting edge evidence that can be drawn upon by those studying, researching, working in, advocating for, and making law and policy related to gender, justice and security.

Section Three synthesises the reflections and recommendations emerging from the Hub projects to provide a cohesive and holistic representation of the Hub and its key lessons for advancing gender justice and inclusive peace. Chapter Ten explores the Hub itself as a model for change, unpacking how its multi-disciplinary, transnational and collaborative feminist praxis can support advances in addressing the interdependent intractable challenges outlined in Section One and further illuminated by the Hub research projects described in Section Two. It conceptualises the Hub as a complex and evolving collection of relationships, which has been variously depicted by Hub members as a feminist web, tapestry, mosaic or bridge. Yet the Hub as a whole has also evolved organically to create its own separate identity. The Chapter explores the advantages, weaknesses, challenges, and risks of the model of the Hub, its practices and ethics. In doing so, this part of the Report translates the Hub's innovative approach into a set of reflections and recommendations that can inform future feminist research addressing gender justice in conflict- or crisis-affected areas and inclusive peace. Chapter Eleven draws on the findings in the country briefs and individual research projects to craft a set of nine key reflections that inform a series of more specific recommendations for each of the seven focus countries. These broader reflections and country-specific recommendations look toward what Hub members call a 'radically transformed future' that can only be achieved through transforming mindsets, processes, language, and institutions. Chapter Twelve concludes the Report with some overall reflections on the impact and legacy of the Hub.

Integrated throughout the Report are two additional substantive contents. First are essays featuring individual Hub Voices. Hub members were invited to contribute short essays reflecting on aspects of the Hub or its work that they felt should be amplified, or simply to express personal thoughts that had been sparked by their interactions with the Hub and its activities. Second are the summaries of the Collective Output Projects detailed above that are spotlighted throughout the Report in key areas where their distinct cross-project, cross-stream work and analysis expand upon the discussion and offer additional insights.

1.5 Conclusion

The Report provides a holistic view of the Gender, Justice and Security Hub's five years of interdisciplinary, transnational, multi-partnership research at the project, country, thematic and Hub-wide levels. It is designed as a cohesive narrative examining how Hub researchers are expanding the gender justice evidence base, how its projects connect and build upon one another and how the collective work of the Hub addresses pressing global, national, and local intractable challenges. The Report was also designed so that each Section, Chapter and Project Profile could be used as a distinct research resource focusing on specific geographies, thematic areas, and research methodologies. The combination of its textual whole and its more targeted segments are intended to make this a resource of broad interest and use.

The Report is innovative in its blend of multiple voices, drawn primarily from academia, activism and practice, reflecting on the findings and recommendations of Hub research and on the experience of being part of such a large research consortium. Some of these voices are warmly appreciative of the opportunities offered by the Hub, while others are more sceptical. The frustrations caused by unanticipated crises – notably COVID-19 – are evident. So too are the challenges and difficulties of adhering to feminist principles in practice,

as well as in theory, in a research project funded and largely administered in the Global North but with so many members located in the Global South. The latter have also experienced the insecurities and physical dangers of conflict-affected locations that are not shared by those in physically and financially more secure environments. Hub members have expressed their concerns about these inequalities, as well as about the hierarchies in academia. The Report also highlights the problems faced by researchers when the geo-political context in which the research was conceived dramatically alters, generating gender backlash and violence, when the hoped-for impact for enhanced gender justice metamorphoses into seeking only to safeguard gains previously made. It nevertheless reveals the vitality and richness of feminist research, the innovations of diverse methodologies, the importance of evidence-based findings and the tremendous range of issues that come under the rubric of gender, justice and security. We, the Hub's members, hope that it is read by and inspires other researchers, practitioners, civil society activists and advocates, and policy and lawmakers to continue to focus on achieving gender justice and inclusive peace and, through this, to radically transform all of our futures.

Endnotes

1. The small team in London comprised a Chief Operating Officer (although this position was vacant for much of the last two years of the Hub), and a Management, Impact, Communication and Administration team which included staff based in London as well as Hub focus countries. Two Research Officers joined the team in January 2023.

2. UN GA resolution 70/1, 25 September 2015, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3. Radhika Coomaraswamy and others, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace A Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325* (United Nations, 2015).

4. SC resolution 1325, preamble.

5. SDG 16: 'We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.'

6. To read more about the three predecessor research networks and projects see - https://justiceanddevelopment.com/ ; https://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/research/strategic-network ; https://www.paccsresearch.org.uk/blog/value-culture-conflict-investigating-sustainable-livelihood-generation-craftswomen-azad-kashmir-pakistan/

7. The thematic streams were reflected in the Hub's governance structure in that two co-directors from each stream were members of the decision-making Executive Group, along with members of the central LSE-based team.

8. The Executive Group designed a set of Feminist Ethical Principles as guidelines for the Hub's work and practice; see further Chapter Ten.

9. These are described in more detail in Chapter Two.

10. See Authors' Note for more information.

11. The Conventions were also an opportunity for Advisory Board members to meet with Hub members and participate in its work.

12. Consistent with the Hub's principles of equity, capability building and researcher- and practitioner-driven decision making, the Colombia Convention included a dedicated Early Career Network (ECN) component from July 15-16, 2023. This was linked to and preceded the main Convention and was designed and facilitated by a steering group of ECN members. This continued the Hub's commitment to developing the independence and autonomy of the group and relationships within it, while the integration with the main Convention also made it possible for many ECN members to attend, contribute to, and benefit from the Convention, including leading sessions for the whole Hub.

13. Concerns about safeguarding in locations in which LGBTIQ+ rights are under attack, along with spiralling costs of travel and accommodation in 2023, meant that the decision was taken not to hold a further Convention in 2024

14. Victoria Braun and Virginia Clarke, 'Using thematic analysis in psychology,' *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (1996): *77*-101.

15. Four projects opted not to take part in the interview process.

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Structural Challenges

Section One: Structural Challenges

The Gender, Justice and Security Hub was established to address a series of structual challenges by seeking to make effective the United Nations (UN) Security Council's (SC) Women and Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda and progressing the General Assembly's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 5 (gender equality) and 16 (peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions).

Section One of the Report briefly discusses the structural obstacles that confronted Hub researchers in the conflict-affected contexts in which their research was based. The obstacles made achievement of these international policy objectives appear out of reach at the commencement of the Hub in 2019, and even more distant in 2024. This Section explores the unjust and violent structures of power that sustain and drive contemporary conflicts and their aftermath through an intersectional feminist lens. It highlights how patriarchal norms and attitudes permeate policy and decision-making and how crisis (such as climate change and the global pandemic) has deepened and further embedded intersecting sexist, racist, colonial, nationalistic assumptions that are antithetical to the advancement of gender, justice and security.

Seeking Gender Justice and Inclusive Security amidst Structural Violences and Contemporary Crises

2.1 Introduction

As explained in Chapter One, the Hub commenced its work in 2019 with Hub members coming together in Conventions in Sri Lanka (January 2020), in Northern Ireland (May 2022) and in Colombia (June 2023), as well as through two online Conventions in 2021. Through a series of structured workshops at the Conventions, supplemented by further online workshops, Hub members considered the obstacles they confronted in their research on gender, justice and security. Concerns relating to political will, inadequate and inequitable allocation of resources, lack of legal frameworks or mechanisms for addressing accountability were raised. However, what emerged as paramount concerns were the interdependent structural violences of patriarchy, capitalism, militarism and colonialism that support and perpetuate inequalities – including those based on sex and gender, race and ethnicity, class, disability – and that are not addressed, even where legal provision has been put in place. The UN Security Council's (UNSC) Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda[1] for instance, seeks to advance women's empowerment through increased participation and representation in law and policy decision-making and to ensure prevention of and protection against sexual violence in armed conflict, but it does not address weaponisation, capitalism, coloniality, militarism or militarisation. Guarantees of women's human rights are also minimal in the succession of WPS resolutions. These omissions are unsurprising given the location of the agenda in the UNSC, the UN body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security[2] but with neither a human rights nor gender mandate.[3] Domination of the UNSC by the five permanent members, leading participants in the global arms trade, inevitably subjugates WPS and the General Assembly's Sustainable Development Agenda[4] to the priorities of the powerful.

Hub members concluded in general that what is needed is not more international law or further resolutions, but policies and practices to dismantle these intersecting systems of power that constitute the patriarchal status quo and that allow denial of gender justice and security to remain invisible or, when made visible, to appear normal. The structural violence in the public and private realms is upheld through the intersecting impact of racism,[5] misogyny,[6] class, homophobia, transphobia and coloniality – multi-layered concepts that have been much analysed from a feminist perspective and through a gender lens. None have fixed meanings and, as post-colonial critiques have shown and the project profiles in Chapters Four-Nine so amply demonstrate, they look and operate differently in different contexts within different societies across the world.[7]

The same is true of the concept of gender: 'an anti-essentialist and intersectional understanding of patriarchy acknowledges that women experience male oppression differently depending on the shape of social and political hierarchy and where individual women operate within that structure.'[8] The Hub's research has been undertaken at a time of a surge in retrogressive movements and a growing global backlash against feminism, gender equality, and women's empowerment. The concept of gender has been the subject of contestation throughout this period, being made subject to an abusive ideology that promotes 'traditional family values' and 'traditional culture' and rejects inclusivity and diversity. This gender 'backlash' has been primarily associated with populist and authoritarian regimes,[9] but reports on the Hub's focus countries recount how it is widely manifested. There are many examples:

- the takeover by the Taliban in Afghanistan in August 2021 has led to a level of violent repression of women and disrespect for their fundamental rights that is 'unparalleled in the world';[10]

- the upholding by the Ugandan Constitutional Court of the 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act, entrenching discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people and exposing them to further violence;[11]

- harassment and abuse of Hub members for their work in the Centre for Gender and Development Studies at the American University of Iraq Sulaimani;

- in Sierra Leone, although it seems that despite criminalisation, gay men do not generally face prosecution, there are reports of the harassment, familial rejection, and denial of basic rights and services;[12] and

- in the midst of a worsening economic crisis, the authorities in Lebanon are cracking down on LGBTIQ+ persons and tolerating the commission of violence against them.[13]

While these countries are the focus of this Report, it is important to note that the gender backlash is a global phenomenon. For example, abortion rights have been rolled back in the US, and in the UK, where the central Hub team is based, there has been a rise in transphobic hate while access to gender affirming care has decreased.

Hub Voices | Charbel Maydaa

The Global Gender Backlash and its Impact on the LGBTIQ+ Community in Conflict-Affected Societies: A Focus on Lebanon

The global gender backlash is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses various forms of resistance to the advancement of gender equality and women's rights. This backlash has been observed in numerous regions around the world and is often perceived as a reaction to the progress made by feminist movements and initiatives aimed at addressing gender disparities. The manifestations of this backlash can be political, social, and cultural in nature, posing significant challenges to the ongoing efforts to promote gender equality. One prominent aspect of the global gender backlash is the rollback of legal protections for women, including the repeal or weakening of laws safeguarding women's rights, such as those related to reproductive health, domestic violence, and workplace discrimination. This regressive environment for gender equality is further exacerbated by the spread of misogynistic ideologies, which permeate various aspects of society, including media, popular culture, and political discourse. These ideologies not only perpetuate harmful stereotypes and attitudes towards women but also undermine efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Resistance to feminist movements and opposition to policies promoting gender equality in workplaces and other spheres of life also constitute significant components of the global gender backlash. Feminist movements advocating for women's rights and gender equality have faced pushback and resistance in many parts of the world, often encountering backlash from individuals and groups opposed to their objectives. Additionally, policies aimed at promoting gender equality in workplaces, educational institutions, and other domains have been met with opposition, hindering progress towards achieving greater gender parity.

The challenges faced by the LGBTIQ+ community in Lebanon are deeply intertwined with the broader socio-economic and political crises engulfing the nation. The economic collapse, characterised by widespread poverty and a crippled public service system, has disproportionately affected marginalised groups, including the LGBTIQ+ community. This marginalisation is exacerbated by the erosion of state protections and the intensifying assaults on the LGBTIQ+ community, as evidenced by physical aggression, institutional bias, and incendiary rhetoric. The state's interference and intimidation, exemplified by the directive to ban LGBTIQ+ gatherings and repressive draft laws, further compound the challenges faced by the community. The impact of the global gender backlash on the LGBTIQ+ community in Lebanon is evident in the intersection of economic despair, societal prejudices, and institutional discrimination. The scarcity of resources and societal biases have left the marginalised, including the LGBTIQ+ community, vulnerable to heightened discrimination and violence. The surge in ground-level hostilities, the erosion of state protections, and the interference and intimidation by the state underscore the multifaceted challenges faced by the LGBTIQ+ community in Lebanon.

The struggles of the LGBTIQ+ community in Lebanon serve as a poignant reflection of the larger societal and institutional biases that have been further exacerbated by the economic crisis and political corruption. The discriminatory laws and societal prejudices have made daily life an act of resistance for many in the community, highlighting the urgent need for inclusivity and respect for the rights of every individual, irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The resilience of the LGBTIQ+ community in Lebanon, despite facing multifaceted challenges, serves as a beacon of hope and underscores the intrinsic drive for justice and acceptance. In conclusion, the global gender backlash has significantly impacted the LGBTIQ+ community in Lebanon, exacerbating their struggles amid economic, political, and societal crises. Addressing the challenges faced

by the community requires comprehensive strategies that encompass legal, social, and institutional dimensions, while also advocating for inclusivity, dignity and freedom for all individuals, irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The global gender backlash, particularly its impact on the LGBTIQ+ community in conflict-affected societies such as Lebanon, holds significant relevance within the scope of the Gender, Justice and Security Hub's wider work and research. The Hub's commitment to advancing gender justice and inclusive peace aligns with the imperative to address the multifaceted challenges faced by the LGBTIQ+ community in conflict-affected contexts. The intersection of conflict, gender-based violence, and discrimination against the LGBTIQ+ community underscores the urgent need to develop an evidence-based understanding of the gender insecurities and injustices prevalent in these settings.

The research conducted by the Hub, which encompasses various themes and focus countries, provides a platform to amplify the voices of women and marginalised groups, including the LGBTIQ+ community, and advocate for reforms that effect local and global policy change. By situating the global gender backlash within the Hub's wider gender, justice, and security work, it becomes possible to address the specific challenges faced by the LGBTIQ+ community in conflict-affected societies, such as Lebanon, and contribute to the development of strategies that promote gender justice and sustainable peace.

The impact of the global gender backlash on the LGBTIQ+ community in conflict-affected societies is intertwined with issues of discrimination, violence, and institutional bias. By conducting research that recognises the variety of gender insecurities and injustices, the Hub can contribute to the evidence

base necessary for advocating for inclusive policies and interventions that address the specific needs of the LGBTIQ+ community in conflict-affected settings. This aligns with the broader goal of advancing SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions, as well as the implementation of the WPS agenda. In conclusion, situating the global gender backlash, especially its impact on the LGBTIQ+ community in conflict-affected societies, within the Gender, Justice, and Security Hub's wider work and research is crucial for advancing the understanding of gender insecurities and injustices in these contexts.

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These attacks on gender and other equalities are occurring against the backdrop of global crises and are exacerbated by them. The realities of climate change became ever more evident throughout the lifetime of the Hub, and the COVID-19 pandemic with the ensuing curtailment of civil liberties in the name of containing the disease has been pervasive. Other crises have been less all-encompassing but with implications that go beyond their immediate location. For instance, the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation has demonstrated the paralysis of the UNSC when confronted with the use of the veto, which has been repeated in the context of Israel's military operations in the Palestinian Gaza Strip. In both instances toxic masculinity intersects with and reinforces racism, misogyny and militarism. Local crises and emergencies (for instance, political upheaval in Sri Lanka, the devastating explosion in Beirut in August 2020, and local manifestations of the global crisis of climate change, including repeated devastating floods in Pakistan and the Philippines) and increasing economic inequality and poverty brought on by budget cuts to public services, austerity and the rise in the cost-of-living have compounded instability and gendered and racial insecurities. Indeed, the concept of backlash fails to adequately convey the scope, temporality and trajectory of the sustained, organised and pervasive attacks on women, on those who reject the gender-binary, and more generally on human rights and justice, especially sexual and reproductive rights and freedoms, that are taking place within the wider framework of global uncertainty.

This Chapter explores some of the ways in which patriarchy, the neoliberal political economy, colonialism and militarisation operate together to shape the gendered landscape of conflict and crisis, creating a hostile environment for research such as that undertaken through the Hub and impeding progress toward gender, justice and security. These structures are mutually reinforcing, and exploit weaker states and territories and the poor and marginalised within all countries.

2.2 Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a mode or structure of power, a tool of gender analysis and a call for action within the global women's and LGBTIQ+ human rights movements.[14] It has been defined in many ways. From their different perspectives, Hub members have understood patriarchy as 'a system of ideas, norms, behaviours and beliefs that privilege men', or as 'male-dominated power relationships interlocking with racism, misogyny and sexual orientation'. It assumes hierarchical relationships and is thus at the heart of colonialism as the legacy still experienced by groups who have not been allowed to control their own lives. In a similar vein, bell hooks uses the intersectional concept 'imperialist, white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy'.[15]

Women as well as men participate in maintaining patriarchy, internalising and conforming to the gender stereotypes that perpetuate it (for instance, women as carers, mothers, passive, victims, located within the family; men as assertive, tough, protectors, potentially violent, wielding authority in the household, in the community and nationally). At the same time patriarchy is harmful to men and boys and all those who reject the patriarchal norms and associated hegemonic masculinity.[16] Human rights law thus requires the modification of gender and other stereotypes,[17] while reasserting patriarchal norms is core to those who promote the backlash against so-called gender ideology. As the UN Secretary General's In-depth study on all forms of violence against women notes:

'Patriarchy has been entrenched in social and cultural norms, institutionalised in the law and political structures and embedded in local and global economies. It has also been ingrained in formal ideologies and in public discourse. Patriarchy restricts women's choices but does not render women powerless, as evidenced by the existence of women's movements and successful claims by women for their rights.'[18]

Nevertheless, contesting patriarchy is dangerous, even illegal where patriarchal practices are integrated into law, since violence is engaged to 'reinforce our indoctrination and acceptance of patriarchy'.[19] The pervasiveness of violence against women and girls and those who reject the sex or gender binary across the boundaries of nation, culture, race, class and religion points to its roots in patriarchy — the systemic and structural domination of all the former by those who resort to all means to assert and retain power.'[20]

Patriarchy – and thereby gender – is 'intertwined with other systems of subordination and exclusion... shaped by the interaction of a wide range of factors, including histories of colonialism and post-colonial domination, nation-building initiatives, armed conflict, displacement and migration'.[21] These multiple axes of power are 'advanced by, complicit in, and often the vehicle for various border crossings'[22] (including those constructed by territory, race, gender, disciplines) that are implicated in the Hub research projects and their interactions through the streams described in Section Two, particularly in the Hub streams on Livelihood, Land and Rights, Masculinities and Sexualities, and Migration and Displacement.

Hub Voices Mohamed Sesay and Simeon Koroma

Land Governance, Neoliberal Dispossession and Gender (In)justice: Experiences from Postwar Sierra Leone

After its decade-long civil war (1991-2002), Sierra Leone attracted international attention as a model for successful liberal peacebuilding, which assumes a positive reinforcing relationship between neoliberal economic development and social justice goals[23]. One of these goals, which the neoliberal economy is expected to enable, if not engineer, concerns the land and property rights of women, especially those impacted by patriarchal customary laws and norms governing the countryside[24]. Although Sierra Leone has progressive statutory laws that seek to protect equal land rights for women, many women are still disadvantaged by customary rules that require them to access land through a male relative, deprive them from family land due to marriage, or threaten their land rights when they are divorced or widowed. All postwar administrations and their development partners have viewed the modernisation of Sierra Leone's land tenure system as simultaneously beneficial to the neoliberal economy and the empowerment of women. The country's land policy, whose implementation is supported by funding and technical assistance from the World Bank, aims to create a just land tenure system that guarantees the land rights of women while opening the local economy to foreign direct investment. With agents of global capital competing over large-scale land acquisition, one postwar administration even pledged to run the economy "like a business" (Human Rights Watch 2018) at the same time as the most progressive gender equality and women empowerment laws were being initiated in the country. Before the Ebola outbreak in 2014, Sierra Leone was ranked as one of the fastest growing economies in the world, due in large part to a massive injection of global capital into its mining and agrobusiness sectors25. But how compatible is the neoliberal economy with gender justice in a postwar environment? Within the context of capitalist economic structures and relations, who benefits from weakening the communal land tenure system? In this context, does liberalising land rights translate into the social and economic empowerment of women?

In our qualitative study across Sierra Leone, we find that while liberalisation of the economy can help to destabilise traditional land tenure norms that are discriminatory on the basis of gender, these reforms at the same time introduce new forms of property dispossession that disproportionately benefit the dominant economic class. Instead of enhancing women's property rights, the processes of neoliberal reform allow the agents of capital, who are mostly well-to-do men, to become new managers and possessors of land. Men are more likely than women to benefit from the expanding land marketisation as investors and land dealers because they already have the capital and influence to capture market opportunities. Although the new land dispossession is no longer based on gender norms around marriage, family and personal inheritance, it nonetheless results in the same economic insecurity, which (neo)liberal reformers promise to address. What we term as neoliberal dispossession[26], we view the modernisation of land tenure as introducing two market-related issues that reinforce socioeconomic precarity for women who are already disadvantaged by patriarchal property norms and practices.

Firstly, when the reform process is not carefully targeted at practices that deny the property rights of women, it becomes a sweeping intervention that undermines the very communal norms that allow landless women access to land under customary law. As privatisation increases the monetary value of land, landowners tend to prefer market transactions that bring financial reward rather than allowing access based on African communal norms of shared property rights. Secondly, the commodification

of land brings into the local economy new property owners who are more inclined to exclude others from the private ownership of, or gain accrued from, land. Such an outcome is more detrimental to women when the new possessors of land are external private investors capable of transferring profits made from land to the metropolitan centre. Women can get a share of the profit from the marketisation of communal or family land, and the ability to claim a title to land without a male relation gives some women an opportunity to earn capital for other purposes. In the name of corporate social responsibility, those who take over communal and family land for industrial purposes provide basic welfare services that sometimes benefit women and their households. But none of these benefits are experienced at the expense of profit maximisation and accumulation by the dominant class of local elites, corporate investors, and local patriarchs. Serving as mechanisms for 'neoliberal dispossession,' these processes of privatisation and commodification divert the promises of equal land rights for women to the holders of capital and power who preside over the neoliberal project, among them the same class of people who benefitted from patriarchal property rules.

These findings must not be construed as a defence of the communal land tenure system nor as a complete repudiation

of (neo)liberal reform efforts in postwar environments. Indeed, some communal land tenure practices preserve the property privileges of men at the expense of women's right in the name of customs and tradition. And modernising the land tenure system can attract global capital and in turn stimulate economic growth. What our findings suggest though is the inherent tension between neoliberal economic development and gender justice when the overarching capitalist structure, in which such reforms take place, remains relatively intact. This is a challenge to (neo) liberal reformers who have embraced liberalisation and privatisation processes as holding the promise of gender equality and women's empowerment, with very little attention to the established capitalist mode and logic of production. When the capitalist economy in which reforms are implemented is left entrenched, the women empowerment agenda not only fails to yield transformative outcomes but can also be used to obscure and reinforce other inequalities linked to capital.

What this means for our wider gender justice and security work is the need for a robust intersectional approach that considers the struggle against all forms of class exploitation as integral to gender justice. While (neo)liberal reforms can enhance the property rights of women subjected to patriarchal customs, these measures must be preceded by, or undertaken in conjunction with,

efforts to transform the capitalist mode of production that disproportionately rewards the holders of capital at the expense of those who provide labour and land in the industrial system. Rather than depending on the market and corporate agents' sense of gender justice, the economic empowerment of women requires a deliberate political strategy to reorient and transform the economy toward social and distributive justice goals. This strategy must target not only the local economy in which women exercise their land rights but also the broader global economy and its neoliberal principles. While this macro-structural change is a long-term objective, the gender justice and security agenda must consider national and local measures to counteract market forces that exploit the economic conditions of women to dispossess them of land. For example, a strong public/private partnership is needed to ensure that corporate actors balance their profit motive with gender justice. Communal land tenure practices and norms, which preserve collective property rights against market takeover, must be strategically engaged and enhanced to protect the land rights of women.

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2.3 Capitalism: The Neoliberal Political Economy of Crises and Conflict

Hub research shows how the 21st century model of Neoliberal capitalism promotes inequalities, including those constructed by race and gender, in all walks of life including the labour market, in public life, in social relations, and in the academy. The associated valuing of resilience makes failure to thrive the individual's responsibility, not the fault of structural inequality and systemic injustice. Austerity politics favouring severe cuts to public services, devaluing of labour in areas where women and socially marginalised people are most highly represented, the precarity of labour, and the commodification of women and the services they proffer (voluntarily or through coercion) were all identified as threats to previously hard-won advancements for women and as obstacles to gender justice and security. Through the undervaluing of 'women's work' and the control and appropriation of reproductive labour women's subordination is essential to capitalism, which builds upon and reinforces patriarchy.[27]

The global political economy and the state-based system that places the supposed demands of national security above those of human security[28] were recognised as intensifying food insecurity, job insecurity, economic insecurity, physical insecurity, thereby creating vulnerabilities to exclusion and exploitation through forced racialised migration and displacement, trafficking and practices such as child and forced marriage. The neoliberal economic system that benefits the minority without regard to the economic precarity of the majority with respect to the essentials of life is maintained through white, heterosexual privilege.

The many Hub projects that seek to promote the economic empowerment of women and other marginalised peoples, for instance, through the creation of goods and crafts, are still subject to the free market; those created in the Global South end up in the Global North to feed the demand for cheap products, thereby reinforcing extractivist colonial and capitalist structures. Nevertheless, Hub research also underlines the importance of creating safe spaces where women can work together on producing goods for sale, or craftwork for post-conflict healing. For instance, during the Colombia Convention, Hub members visited the newly opened museum in Mampuján, where, as part of the reparations programme, women have produced tapestry and quilt work depicting the violence that had occurred in their village during the conflict and the ways they have sought to rebuild their lives. Women described the restorative impact of designing and sewing these pieces of artwork. Such spaces also provide opportunities for forming mutually supportive networks and community responses to gender-based and other violence.

Hub Voices — Mossarat Qadeem

Crafting Resilience: Transforming Pain into Artistic Masterpieces

In this reflection on *Crafting Resilience,* I will be sharing insights from the stories of women who were victims of violent extremism and the successful cases of radicalised women undergoing positive transformations in Pakistan. In doing so, this work emphasises that when socio-economic circumstances drive women into violent extremism, those same factors can be instrumental in pulling them out of such situations. Likewise, providing opportunities for women victims to express their sorrows, grief, and trauma through craft-making instils them with newfound energy and inspiration for life.

These reflections are drawn from the Culture and Conflict research project in the Hub's Transformation and Empowerment work stream. Culture and Conflict is a collaboration between academic partners in the UK and civil society organisations in Afghanistan, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. PAIMAN Trust is the Pakistan-based project partner. PAIMAN worked with the project to support artisans in empowering themselves, refining their products, connecting them to national and international markets, and mentoring the younger generation in their craft.

Context: Situation of the conflict affected Swat area of Pakistan

PAIMAN witnessed the suppression of women, restrictions on their mobility and closing of girls' schools during the Taliban's presence in the Swat District of Pakistan from 2007-2010. But at the same time the same Taliban groups used women for a wide range of tasks, from logistics and recruitment to frontline roles, including as suicide bombers. Long after the Taliban were forced to leave the area after a military operation, many of the women and girls have still not fully recovered from the traumatic experiences of losing loved ones, displacement or complex hardships. The air of mistrust that engulfed the region and the prolonged exposure to acts of violent extremism had affected everyone psychologically, socially and economically. In the conservative and tradition-based society of Swat, the majority of women were totally dependent on their menfolk and almost never left the house for any economic activities, so much so that men would purchase dresses for women as well other items of their daily needs. It was these cultural norms, and not Islam, that kept women contained in the four walls of their houses and restricted them to house chores only.

Background of craftswomen

All 32 women selected for this crafting project were already engaged in PAIMAN's economic empowerment program and were members of PAIMAN's Women Peace group called TOLANA. TOLANAs are an internal community peace structure used to engage key stakeholders and communities in dialogue, create awareness, find collective solutions for preventing violent extremism and advocate for inclusion of women in decision making at all levels. 15 out of 32 craft women underwent PAIMAN's positive transformation (de-radicalisation) program in 2011-12. These radicalised women had used their mobilisation skills to raise funds for extremist groups and to act as their informants and facilitators. Two of the women stitched clothes and at times even suicide jackets. During their positive transformation process they were also taught vocational skills like stitching and embroidery so that they could utilise their skills in positive activities as well as contribute to their family's income.

The distinctive aspect of the group was that, among its 32 members, 10 had been directly affected by violent extremism, having lost their loved ones. Additionally, there were four mothers of radicalised boys and three wives of missing persons. Uniting women grappling with anger, despair and a sense of injustice

alongside those burdened with feelings of guilt, shame and embarrassment was a daunting task. However, by offering opportunities for entrepreneurship, a spirit of optimism, hope and empowerment was instilled in these women. This enabled them to confront and overcome such emotions through self-employment, bolstered self-esteem and a strengthened sense of 'social identity'.

Through these activities, some traditional, patriarchal, colonial and other cultural layers in which Islam has been veiled and that contributed to women's exploitation were removed. This was achieved by drawing from religious texts and practices, based on the lives of the Prophet and his companions, where women entrepreneurs were not only supported but also facilitated and encouraged.

Weaving harmony through Culture and Craft intervention

It is in this scenario and with this distinct group of women that PAIMAN took the Culture and Conflict project to the craftswomen. Importantly, PAIMAN already had a relationship with the women and had worked with them throughout the period of Taliban control, as well as after the time of the military operation. After building their capacities, these women were actively engaged in stitching masks, sanitary pads and quilts during COVID-19 and the 2022 floods in Pakistan respectively.

As they transitioned from leisurely embroidering their loved ones' names onto handkerchiefs, accompanied by singing and laughter, to utilising embroidery as a means of earning amidst conflict, crisis and displacement, these invisible women forged an identity of

their own. Kishwar commented, *'crafting has become a form of therapy for me, allowing me to channel my emotions constructively. Being part of TOLANA has shown me that despite our diverse backgrounds, we can find common ground and support each other through our journey of healing.'*

These women have not only become successful micro-entrepreneurs but have become role models for others to follow. They rehabilitated themselves through building their capacity in refining their craft making, entrepreneurial and community leadership skills. Their journey from once radical supporters of violent extremist groups to becoming community leaders using non-violent means to mobilise other women for building social cohesion is testimony to the fact that socio-economic empowerment opportunities have transformative effects, even in the most conservative communities like that of Swat. As one of the women, Ulfat commented, *'working on these crafts has given me a sense of purpose and accomplishment. It's empowering to create something beautiful out of the pain and chaos we've endured.'*

Through this process, the women come to understand the significance of forgiveness and compassion, which they then impart to the next generation. Collaborating with other craftswomen enables them to comprehend one another, effectively communicate their emotions and appreciate the beauty of peaceful coexistence. Nagin, a de-radicalised craftswoman said, *'being part of this collaborative effort has allowed me to break free from the constraints of societal expectations and take on leadership roles I never thought possible.'*

Crafting resilience

Crafting together serves as a transformative process where barriers are broken down, empathy is cultivated, and shared humanity is acknowledged. It opens up a profound avenue for healing and reconciliation. The act of crafting together provided a tangible and creative outlet for expressing emotions and experiences that would have been difficult to articulate verbally. Additionally, the cross-generational and intersectional opportunities fostered a sense of community and mutual support. This alliance empowered these women to actively involve their communities in preventing violent extremism, take leadership roles during emergencies and become advocates for those who are marginalised and silenced. The transition from being marginalised to being acknowledged as a leader within their conservative community, which still harbours violent extremist tendencies, is a testament to their extraordinary courage, resilience, reliance on peer support and empowerment.

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The urgency of recognising the STRUCTUAL CHALLENGES of layered inequalities was exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the multiple associated crises, as well as those that were obfuscated by the global attention directed towards its management and control. The UN Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee) noted early in the pandemic that women's disproportionate burden in assuming care and schooling for children while they were at home, attending to those who became ill and their high representation in the health workforce all enhanced their risk of contracting COVID-19.[29] It also put them at 'increased risk of domestic, sexual, economic, psychological and other forms of gender-based violence by abusive partners, family members, and care persons'.[30] Another effect of the pandemic was that it 'starkly exposed the dependence of formal economies, and the daily functioning of families and communities, on the invisible and unpaid care labour often carried out by women, alongside the underpaid labour carried out by marginalised groups.'[31] Although the CEDAW Committee, other human rights experts and feminists[32] urged women's participation in COVID-19 task forces, they were largely excluded.[33]

The absence of women and persons from marginalised groups from key decision and policymaking translated into gender-blind policies and widening gender, racial and class-based inequalities, the effects of which were rarely integrated into economic planning and management of the pandemic.

2.4 Coloniality

The Hub's seven focus countries are imbued with histories of colonialism and conflict, mirrored by the United Kingdom's history as a white, colonial power. Colonialism was defined by some Hub members as 'a social, political, ideological, economic and cultural system of control and exploitation of regions, nations, continents, groups and institutions.' Development of capitalism went 'hand in hand with colonialism. ... Capitalist expansion was premised on the appropriation of land and the extraction of resources and labour in territories inhabited by Indigenous populations that were constructed as uncivilized, unproductive and, in essence, inferior to the colonizers.'[34] Racist ideology was thus integral to colonialism, the pernicious effects of which continue today.

Patriarchy was central to constructing imperial and colonial hierarchies while gender relations were reordered through colonialism. Male same-sex sexual activity, for example, was rendered illegal in many jurisdictions through colonial legislation.[35] Colonialism reinforced patriarchy in both the Indigenous populations and the colonisers. The latter assert their authority over the colonial territory and people while colonised men seek to reassert their masculinity through control of women, replicating the specific gender hierarchies of the colonisers where they previously did not exist.

Colonial domination is not just about colonialism – land and resource expropriation and political domination – but also encompasses coloniality, or 'the colonization of the mind'.[36] Examinations of the 'coloniality of power' unpack the social, political, and racial hierarchies that emerge from the history of Eurocentrism and colonisation[37]. Coloniality injects race into hierarchical ordering, a 'pivotal turn' in civilisation since it 'replaces the relations of superiority and inferiority based on domination' and instead constructs division and hierarchy in terms of biology. But coloniality is not solely about racial difference. It is an axis of power that is all-encompassing: 'it permeates all control of sexual access, collective authority, labor, subjectivity/intersubjectivity and the production of knowledge.'[38] Specifically, coloniality can be understood as imposing values and expectations on gender and sexuality within the 'modern/colonial gender system'[39]. Decoloniality must therefore be pursued through both a racialised and gender lens.[40]

Hub research exposed the many colonial legacies that continue to impact lives, work and consciousness in academia and activism. These manifest in and across:

- race relations;

- academic hierarchies, publications and institutions;

- justice institutions (including the law);

- social relationships, including through identities, on-going privilege, exclusions and inclusion.

Hub projects also revealed significant colonial legacies. The need for decolonial thinking and action – a 'specific type of decolonization which advocates for the disruption of legacies of racial, gender and geopolitical inequalities and domination'[41] – was central to the structural challenges the Hub was formed to address.

2.5 Militarism/Militarisation

An assumption that military means are the way to enhance security imbues the WPS agenda with its focus on a victim (female)/protector (male) binary and military peacekeeping under the auspices of the UNSC. Sexual violence is identified as a tactic of war, along with the affirmation that 'effective steps to prevent and respond to such acts of sexual violence can significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security'[42] – the primary responsibility of the UNSC.[43] The 2015 Global Study requested by the UNSC on the implementation of WPS[44] recorded a resounding 'no' to militarisation. Consultations with women around the world sought an end to 'the present cycle of militarization with its unprecedented levels of military spending' and insisted that the UN 'must take the lead in stopping the process of militarization and militarism that began in 2001 in an ever-increasing cycle of conflict.'[45] To this end, 'armed intervention by the international community and Member States must only be the last resort.'

The UNSC did not heed this call. The next WPS resolution[46] assumed ongoing military peacekeeping missions seeking only to mainstream gender analysis and technical gender expertise into all stages of such missions from planning to drawdown, and for senior gender advisors and other gender officer posts to be recruited for multidimensional peacekeeping operations. In other words, militarised peacekeeping missions would continue but with the involvement of technical gender expertise and the inclusion of more women.[47] The resolution called for greater integration of WPS with agendas for counter-terrorism and countering-violent extremism – activities that are heavily militarised. Since the Global Study, states have become increasingly militarised and militarism further normalised, for instance, in language that makes domestic concerns such as immigration and crime into security issues[48] and relationships of oppression and violence appear as natural and reasonable. Militarism has been overtly strengthened in the global arena and effectively embedded in the WPS agenda. Cynthia Enloe has set out militarism as an ideology promoting that:

- the state is best placed to both define and protect against threats;

- armed force is the ultimate resolver of inter-state disagreement;

- resort to collective violence is a rational pursuit;

- hierarchical relations are necessary to effective action;

- a state without a military force is both naïve and irresponsible (feminine);

- the possession and use of weapons are necessary to guarantee security and peace;

- in war those who are feminine need armed protection and;

- any man who refuses to engage in armed violent action is a traitor and jeopardising his own status as a manly man.[49]

This multi-layered understanding of militarism as an ideology reveals its ability to connect and catalyse various forms of structural violence while simultaneously camouflaging itself within the WPS legal and policy architectures, globally and specifically in the conflict-affected localities of the Hub's research.

The allure of militarism and militarisation to states is reflected in the steady increase in weapons expenditure, reaching 2.44 trillion U.S. dollars in 2023, the largest year-on-year rise on weapons spending since 2009.[50] This phenomenon is not confined to the Global North as military expenditure went up 'in all five of the geographical regions, ... with particularly large increases recorded in Europe, Asia and Oceania and the Middle East.' In the violent conflicts following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine,[51] in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, notably Gaza, in Sudan, Yemen and elsewhere, the UNSC's commitment to implementation of its WPS agenda is conspicuously lacking. The founding WPS resolution, 1325 adopted in October 2000, omits reference to 'general and complete disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control',[52] militarism or militarisation – omissions that weaken its potential to ensure gender justice and security. In the current climate of compounding contemporary crises to which recourse to inter and intra state force is a normalised response, militarism's central role in global gender injustice and insecurity illuminates our understanding of the gender backlash. Questioning the need for militarised responses to crises and urging instead peaceful paths to peace and stability is seen as naïve – feminine. Protest against violence is silenced; peace camps and marches for peace are clamped down upon as disruptive and posing threats to security.

Reflecting on these forms of structural violence, Hub research points to the need for holistic responses far larger than anything individual Hub projects, or even the totality of Hub projects, can generate alone.

2.6 Impact of Crisis on the Hub's Work

The multiple global and local crises referred to briefly above (as well as other unanticipated events) were generally external to the Hub, but their impact upon Hub members, their research, wellbeing and security was felt in many ways, and these effects were a recurring theme throughout the Hub's work. To many Hub members, it seems that the Story of the Hub has been one of reaction to and firefighting against ongoing crisis.

For some members of the Hub, the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdown had especially cruel consequences, including deaths or severe illness of family members, friends and colleagues, social isolation and adverse effects on mental health and well-being. Job losses among family and friends[53] exacerbated the hardships, especially where they created further dependencies. Given our high percentage of women members, many in the Hub incurred caring and other time-consuming responsibilities. The imposed curtailment of mobility prevented planned field research and data collection, and in-person meetings within institutions and communities, which severely disrupted research timelines. Ability to continue working depended on individual circumstances but for many Hub members working from home and online was not easy and it undermined the Hub's ethic of equitable partnerships. The uncertainty around how long restrictions would continue and their variation across the different locations in which Hub members were placed caused anxieties about personal and project sustainability and income security.

COVID-19 lockdowns also fuelled violence in the 'shadow pandemic' of gender-based discrimination and violence[54] at both the inter-personal and community level. Hub members from Uganda told of the militarisation of public health, of worsening conditions in quarantine centres and of conflicts over land. Just as 'post-conflict' is a misnomer for women,[55] so too have the effects of COVID-19 lingered on after its supposed end in broken social structures, increased poverty, livelihood struggles and ongoing caring responsibilities falling primarily on women and girls.

The rethinking of projects necessitated by the punishing cuts to the Hub budget, imposed by UKRI following the UK's Conservative government's decision to cut the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget' in 2021, caused further disruption to working, undercut long-term planning and heightened anxieties about the sustainability of individual income and projects as well as of the Hub itself. The timing of the budgetary cuts while lockdown measures were still in place further aggravated their impact and lowered morale; planning and communicating difficult decisions online was not optimal. Even after the reinstallation of the budget after a lengthy and unscheduled review process, price increases driven by global economic changes, particularly for international travel and accommodation, required further compromises for individuals and for the Hub more broadly. For instance, the costs incurred for the Convention in Colombia in 2023 were far greater than originally budgeted, which limited the number of Hub members who could attend while still increasing the overall expenditure. This meant that planning for an in-person all-Hub concluding event to disseminate research and build the Hub's legacy was no longer possible. For many projects, one of the main effects of the budgets cuts was a slimming down or cancellation of engagement with communities, groups and people directly affected by the research in favour of academic outputs. This was largely due to lockdowns and the impossibility of gathering groups of people, but it had a significant effect on how research was designed, data gathered and results disseminated and communicated. Often it meant that research activities were only conducted online and therefore became inaccessible for many people, especially marginalised groups in conflict-affected settings with limited internet access. This said, individual projects were often able to mitigate these challenges by relying on already established networks of in-country NGO partners who were able to adjust research and dissemination activities quickly and meaningfully – which is testament to the importance of the feminist and equitable research design and partnership practices employed by these projects.

COLLECTIVE OUTPUT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

COVID-19 and Women in Transitional Countries: A Comparative Perspective

Professor Angelica Rettberg; Luisa Salazar-Escalante; María Gabriela Vargas Parada; Hernando Castro; Azra Nazar; Shanya Mohammed; Harriet Pamara; Zakaria Nasser; Omar Kakar; Melvin Tarawalie; Ana María Granda Moreno[56]

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, our interdisciplinary project, 'COVID-19 and Women in Transitional Countries: A Comparative Perspective,' seeks to elucidate the pandemic's nuanced impact on women across transitional countries, leveraging a comprehensive analytical framework. This endeavour is steered by a collaborative team from the Gender, Justice and Security Hub, with Angelika Rettberg of Universidad de los Andes serving as the project leader and co-director, bringing her extensive expertise in Gender, Justice and Security to the forefront of our analysis. Regional coordination is led by Luisa Salazar-Escalante and the administrative and operative oversight provided by María Gabriela Vargas, ensuring the project's logistical and methodological rigor. Additionally, William McInerney and Nicky Armstrong provided research support from the central Gender, Justice and Security Hub team at the London School of Economics.

Integral to our research methodology are the contributions of our in-country Research Assistants: Hernando Castro (Colombia), Harriet Pamara (Uganda), Shanya Mohammed (Kurdistan-Iraq), Azra Nazar (Sri Lanka), Zakaria Nasser (Lebanon), and Melvin Tarawalie (Sierra Leone). Their localised insights and data collection efforts are crucial for developing country-specific profiles and understanding the pandemic's impact from a ground-level perspective. The country profiles present data on key indicators such as access to the labour market, employment, education, health, mental wellbeing, violence against women, among others, by analysing secondary data from sources like the national statistics departments of each country, UN Women, the World Bank, etc.

Credit: Paula Natalia Alfonso Ruiz, Social Science Faculty of Universidad de los Andes

From left to right: María Gabriela Vargas Parada, Professor Angelica Rettberg, and Luisa Salazar-Escalante

Furthermore, the project uniquely incorporates the personal and professional experiences of Hub researchers working in these countries and their observed impacts of the pandemic on women in their respective research communities. This dual perspective aims not only to quantify the pandemic's effects but also to qualitatively illustrate the lived experiences of those most affected, enriching our understanding through a blend of empirical data and narrative evidence.

From grappling with socioeconomic barriers in Sri Lanka to addressing concerns of environmental sustainability in Uganda, negotiating political complexities in Iraq, and contending with the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, each chapter of the project illuminates the multifaceted nature of these struggles.

Moreover, it delves into the nuances of implementing peace agreements and engaging in ongoing negotiations with remaining armed groups in Colombia, combating the enduring scourge of violence against women in post-war Sierra Leone, and grappling with Lebanon's status as one of the most unequal nations amidst a crisis of unprecedented magnitude.

These stories not only illuminate the experiences of women but also the adaptability of researchers in these challenging environments, contributing to our understanding of the pandemic's multifaceted impact and the necessity for gender-sensitive policies in the post-pandemic era. These documents describe the different challenges, opportunities and strategies of the Hub's research projects; they started in 2019, before the pandemic, and had to adjust their work during and after being significantly affected by lockdowns, inability to travel to research countries, lack of access to data, physical and mental health concerns, difficulties reaching the communities, work-life balance, and numerous other uncertainties. Nevertheless,

researchers managed to adapt their projects to these realities, adjusting time frames and methodologies, taking advantage of technology to conduct research online, strengthening communitarian and civil society partnerships, and prioritising well-being of colleagues and participants.

In summary, the narratives from Afghanistan, Colombia, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Uganda, and Kurdistan-Iraq provide a rich tapestry of experiences, illustrating the resilience and challenges faced by women in these diverse contexts while also acknowledging that the pandemic exacerbated existing vulnerabilities of women prior the pandemic and represented a setback in gender equality goals. Through this project, we contribute to the discourse on gender, justice and security, with regard to a critical moment for the gender equality agenda: the COVID-19 pandemic. We offer data and reflections on the main challenges, but also the opportunities that the pandemic represented for the Hub's work.
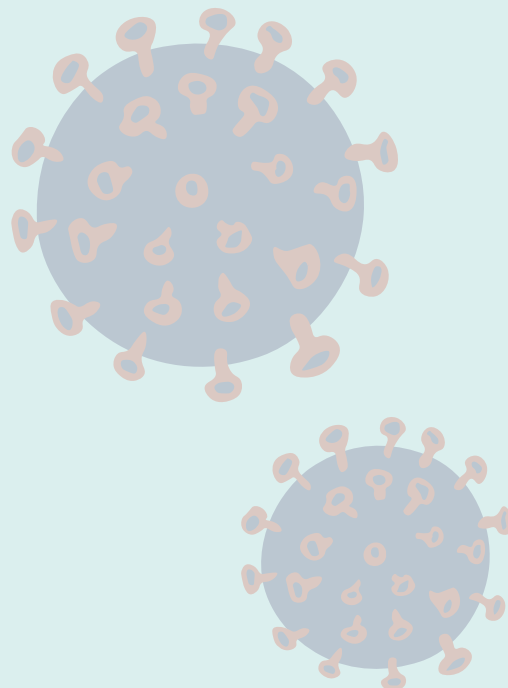
Many Hub members were affected in their work and personal lives by pushback against women's rights, overt homophobia and transphobia, including within institutions. An added concern was how work on women's rights can be co-opted to justify anti-trans discourse. The severity of the backlash caused some researchers to choose lesser visibility for a period of time impacting adversely on the outreach of their work. Hub members had to remain sensitive to their local environments. Timing, place and strategy for research on issues such as gender, justice and security have to be carefully evaluated and a project that is feasible in one locale may not be elsewhere. Funders can be insufficiently sensitive to local challenges, lading to pressure to retain research impact even in toxic conditions.

By far the most severe challenge to Hub members and their work was that faced by those in Afghanistan at the time of the military takeover and imposition of authority by the Taliban in August 2021.[57] Afghan Hub members work on gender, justice and security associated with a Western-based funder and institutions meant they and their families faced a terrifying, life-threatening situation. A group of Hub members outside Afghanistan worked tirelessly to maintain communications, to seek safe passage out of Kabul, to secure immediate and subsequently longer term physical and financial security, but faced intransigence from many institutions with far greater resources and power to assist. The situation in Afghanistan is an extreme example of what is being termed gender apartheid,[58] but gender-based discrimination and violence are prevalent in all the Hub focus countries, as well as elsewhere. They are pervasive in the culture of the early 21st century.

Nevertheless, the multiple crises, the enforced lockdown and changes to researchers' working and domestic life circumstances also provided opportunities for reprogramming projects and bringing innovative and creative thinking, methodologies and logistics to the fore. Some examples were focus groups carried out across rooftops, 'social media mapping', drawing on public discourse, conventional and social media networks to keep projects moving forward, offering new insights into knowledge production, exchange and the importance of its intended audience. Zoom and Teams were resorted to, opening up new channels of communication and minimising the impact of isolation. Interviews, webinars, conferences and simply keeping in contact with each other were all undertaken virtually, including two Hub-wide Conventions in 2021. An advantage of this was that people who had not previously been in direct communication were able to build relationships and gain support, although some Hub members felt that their experience of the digital space had not been female friendly and that some interactions felt tenuous rather than enduring. Despite these reservations it seemed that, for many Hub members, adversity had engendered a feeling of solidarity and even what was described as 'pivoting in joyful ways.'

2.7 Conclusion

The UN has evolved frameworks for advancing gender equality,[59] justice and security, and states have accepted obligations that have been amplified by the human rights treaty bodies and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. In addition to these legal frameworks, policy initiatives have been developed, including the 21st century the SDGs and the UNSC's WPS agenda, which formed the starting point for the Hub. The debate that is central to this Report is whether – considering their failure to address the axes of power identified as key obstacles to the achievement of gender justice and inclusive security – these agendas remain worthwhile or whether the challenges they represent are truly intractable. No country is on course to fulfil the SDGs, the UNSC has shown itself unable to implement its own WPS agenda in contemporary conflicts, and there has been no new WPS resolution adopted since 2019. The projects described in Section Three demonstrate many gains at the micro-level, but how do we reconcile these with the huge backlash at the macro-level that means we are struggling to retain any progress made? We are barely hanging on to the cliff edge of the radical world we envisaged when we commenced our work.

There are contrasting perspectives on this within the Hub. Some argue that the SDGs and WPS offer a good framework for policy that can be applied at the local level, have provided women with a tool for demanding participation and should be ring-fenced to provide at least some safe space for bottom-up research. Others counter that the absence of political will for implementation, the problematic nature of the concepts, the lack of data disaggregation by gender and their top-down emphasis all undermine their usefulness for advancing a transformative agenda. There are perhaps two options: to abandon these UN driven agendas and seek a changed world through other means or to continue with what amounts to little more than tinkering at the edges, challenging injustices and insecurities from within, celebrating marginal gains and striving not to lose those we have made, while recognising the need for meaningful alternatives and paths of resistance. These issues are returned to in Chapter Eleven when we consider the possibilities for a radically transformed future while acknowledging that the future we are living in today is very different from the one we envisaged when the Hub commenced its work.

In conclusion, this opening Chapter focused on the interdependent structures of violence, namely patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism, and militarism, and the many specific contemporary crises that have impacted on Hub research. Structural analysis is necessary to illuminate the STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES the Hub's work has sought to address and is embedded within its 38 research projects. It is only by fully understanding the depth, breadth, and severity of the violent status quo that researchers, policy and lawmakers, practitioners, and activists can begin to find ways to challenge and potentially transform it into a more gender just, equal, and secure future.

Endnotes

1   The WPS agenda comprises UN Security Council resolutions 1325, 31 October 2000; 1820, 19 June 2008; 1888, 30 September 2009; 1889, 5 October 2009; 1960, 16 December 2010; 2106, 24 June 2013; 2122, 18 October 2013; 2242, 13 October 2015; 2467, 23 April 2019; 2493, 29 October 2019.

2   UN Charter, 1945, article 24.

3   Within the structure of the United Nations Organisation issues of social justice and human rights are the responsibility of the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Economic and Social Council. There is a lack of joined up thinking between for example the UN human rights treaty bodies and the Security Council, even where the latter adopts an agenda such as WPS.

4   UN General Assembly resolution 70/1, 25 September 2015, Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

5   bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Pluto Press, 1981); Kimberly Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 189, no. 1 (1989).

6   Misogyny has been defined as 'a property of social environments in which women are liable to encounter hostility due to the enforcement and policing of patriarchal norms and expectations'; Kate Manne, *Down Girl – The Logic of Misogyny* (Oxford University Press, 2017). Although women are the primary focus of misogyny, anyone who unsettles the patriarchal heterosexual binary order is at risk of attack, explaining the targeting of non-binary people.

7   E.g. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles," Signs 28 (2003).

8   Cassandra Mudgway, 'The Elimination of 'Patriarchy' under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,' *Berkeley Journal of Gender Law and Justice* 36, no. 1 (2021).

9   'Misogyny is a common thread in the rise of authoritarianism and in the spread of conflict and violent extremism'; Report of the Secretary-General, Women and Peace and Security, S/2023/725, 28 September 2023, para 2.

10   Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, A/HRC/55/80, 22 February 2024, para 2.

11   Human Rights Watch, 'Uganda: Court Upholds Anti-Homosexuality Act', 4 April 2024.

12   Human Dignity Trust, Sierra Leone at https://www.humandignitytrust.org/country-profile/sierra-leone/

13   Amnesty International, 'Lebanon: Attack on Freedoms Targets LGBTI People Repressive Legislation; Unlawful Crackdown', 5 September 2023.

14   Cassandra Mudgway, above note 8.

15   bell hooks, 'Understanding patriarchy' in *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004)

16   bell hooks, ibid.

17   E.g. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979, article 5 (a): modify social and cultural patterns of conduct to eliminate practices based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006, article 8 (1) (b): 'combat stereotypes, ... relating to persons with disabilities, including those based on sex and age'; Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, 2007, Principle Two: 'elimination of prejudicial or discriminatory attitudes or behaviours which are related to the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of any sexual orientation or gender identity or gender expression.'

18   Report of the Secretary-General, In-depth study on all forms of violence against women, A/61/122.Add I, 6 July 2006, para 70.

19   bell hooks, above note 15.

20   In-depth study on all forms of violence against women, above note xviii, para 69.

21   Ibid, para 71.

22   Vrushali Patil, 'From Patriarchy to Intersectionality: A Transnational Feminist Assessment of How Far We've Really Come,' *Signs* 38, no. 4 (2013): 785.

23   Gearoid Millar, 'Local experiences of liberal peace: Marketization and emergent conflict dynamics in Sierra Leone,' *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 4 (2016): 569-581.

24   Gearoid Millar, 'We Have No Voices for That: Land Rights, Power, and Gender in Rural Sierra Leone,' *Journal of Human Rights* 14, no. 4 (2015): 445-462.; Caitlin Ryan, 'Large-scale land deals in Sierra Leone at the intersection of gender and lineage,' *Third World Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (2018): 189-206.

25   Human Rights Watch. (2014). 'Whose Development: Human Rights Abuses in Sierra Leone's Mining Boom,' Washington D.C.: Human Rights Watch.

26   David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Michael Levien, 'Gender and land dispossession: a comparative analysis,' *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44, no. 6 (2017): 1111–1134; Michael Levien, *Dispossession without Development: Land Grabs in Neoliberal India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

27   Maria Lugones, 'The Coloniality of Gender', *Worlds & Knowledges Otherwise* (Spring 2008).

28   'The neoliberal policy environment and the proliferation of armed conflicts, often caused by struggles to control power and productive resources, have set back women's access to such resources and increased their exposure to violence'; Special rapporteur on violence against women, 'Political economy of women's human rights', A/HRC/11/6, 18 May 2009.

29   CEDAW Committee, Guidance Note on CEDAW and COVID-19.

30   Ibid, para 3.

31   Sara Cantillon, Odile Mackett, Sara Stevano, *Feminist Political Economy: A Global Perspective* (New York: Agenda Publishing, 2023).

32   E.g. Louise Arimatsu and Rasha Obaid, 'In Times of Crisis', LSE Blog, 9 June 2020; Christine Chinkin and Madeleine Rees, 'Our Male Leaders Declared War on the Pandemic. Our Response Must Match That'. LSE Blog, 11 May 2020.

33   Report of the Secretary-General, Women and Peace and Security, S/2020/946, 25 September 2020, para 3: globally women formed 24 per cent of members of COVID-19 task forces and lower in conflict-affected areas at 18 per cent.

34   Maria Lugones, 'Howard a Decolonial Feminism,' *Hypatia* 25, no. 4 (2010): 742.

35   E.g. Sierra Leone, Offences against the Person Act 1861, section 61.

36   Sylvia Tamale, *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism* (Daraja Press,2020). See also Franz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth (Grove Press, 1961) and Ngũgī wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind* (Zimbabwe Publishing House,1987).

37   Anibal Quijano, 'Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,' *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 533-580.

38   Maria Lugones, 'Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System', *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007): 186-209.

39   Ibid, 189.

40 However, it is important to acknowledge Lugones argues that the very notion of 'gender', including potentially how the organisations like the Hub use it, is a colonial construction that is consistently, including now, used to destroy colonised peoples. The 'coloniality of gender' shows the many ways in which gender is inextricably linked with colonialism and its impacts.

41 Sylvia Tamale, above note 32, 'Some Key Definitions'. Tamale adds Walter Mignolo's definition of decoloniality: 'delinking from the colonial matrix of power'.

42 Security Council resolution 1820, 19 June 2008.

43 The SC can authorise peacekeeping operations under chapter VII of the UN Charter.

44 Radhika Coomaraswamy and others, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace A Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution* 1325 (United Nations, 2015).

45 Ibid, 17.

46 Security Council resolution 2242, 13 October 2015.

47 Despite urging for women's greater participation in peacekeeping operations in the WPS resolutions, women remain under-represented in military contingents; they constitute between 20 and 30 per cent of civilian staff in the largest peacekeeping missions. The UN delivers training programmes in support of gender parity. Report of the Secretary-General, Women and Peace and Security, S/2023/725, 28 September 2023, paras 20 – 25.

48 E.g. 'the war on crime', treating immigration as a national security issue.

49 Cynthia Enloe, 'Understanding Militarism, Militarization, and the Linkages with Globalization using a Feminist Curiosity' in *Gender and Militarism: Analyzing the Links to Strategize for Peace* (Women's Peacemakers Program, 2014).

50 Report, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 22 April 2024.

51 Russia has occupied Crimea and parts of Eastern Ukraine since 2014.

52 CEDAW, 1979, preamble.

53 Despite the 2021 cut to the Hub budget redundancies within the Hub were avoided.

54 UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres: 'Everywhere, COVID-19 has led to a shadow pandemic of violence against women and girls.' UN Press Release, 25 October 2021.

55 'For most women in post-conflict environments, the violence does not stop with the official ceasefire or the signing of the peace agreement and often increases in the post-conflict setting.' CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation No 30, on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, CEDAW/C/GC/30, 18 October 2013, para 35.

56 When referencing this section of the Report, cite the authors listed here directly.

57 See further country brief on Afghanistan in Section Two below.

58 'The systematic and institutionalised discrimination that seeks to exclude women from all facets of life in Afghanistan necessitates an examination of the evolving phenomenon of gender apartheid'; Special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, 11 September 2023 at https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2023/09/special-rapporteur-human-rights-council-systematic-and-institutionalised

59 SDG 5 on gender equality is reinforced by SDG 10 which asserts: 'empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status'.
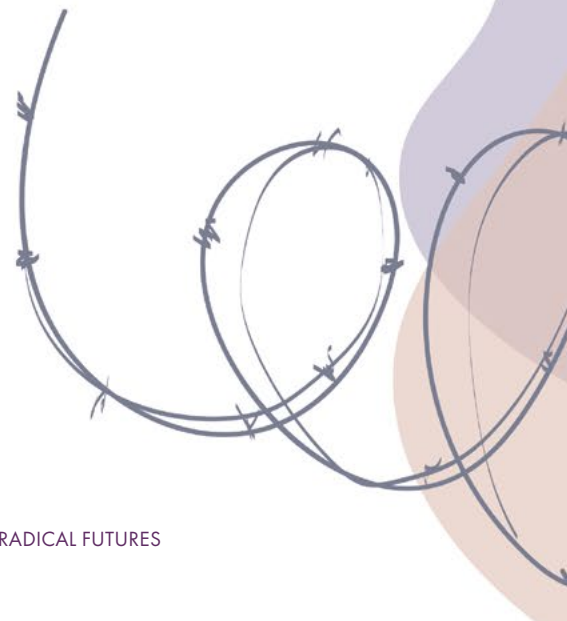
02

Research
Findings &
Recommendations

Section Two: Hub Research Findings and Recommendations

As noted in Chapter One, the Hub is a research network consisting of 38 research projects, organised into six thematic research streams, and working primarily in seven focus countries. This section provides an overview of the Hub's work, highlighting the challenges it addresses, presenting key findings and emerging themes, and making recommendations at country, theme and project levels.

The section provides three layers of analysis. Chapter Three situates the Hub's work geographically by outlining the key challenges, findings, and recommendations for each of the Hub's seven focus countries – Afghanistan, Colombia, Kurdistan-Iraq, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, and Uganda.

Next, Chapters Four to Nine explore the Hub's work in more depth and detail thematically. The Hub's Work is divided into six 'research streams'. This includes four key thematic areas of research: Transformation and Empowerment; Livelihood, Land and Rights; Masculinities and Sexualities; and Migration and Displacement – and two cross-cutting themes – Law and Policy Frameworks, and Methodological Innovation. Each of these chapters starts by outlining the driving questions and problems in that thematic area of research and then identifying the ways Hub projects have advanced knowledge and practice. Following this top-level analysis, each chapter provides concise summaries of all Hub projects focused on that theme – introducing the project and outlining its key findings and recommendations.

Combining geographic, thematic, and project level analysis, this section presents an encyclopaedic overview of the Hub's innovative research, providing critical new evidence and insights relevant to those studying, working in, advocating for, and making law and policy related to gender, justice and security.

Focus Countries

Hub focus countries

Hub project countries

This chapter provides context for countries where Hub research took place, focusing on Afghanistan, Colombia, Kurdistan-Iraq, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Uganda. While all conflict-affected societies, these contexts include a rich and diverse spectrum of geographies, cultures, challenges and opportunities for gender justice and inclusive peace. In line with the Hub's commitment to a comparative and transnational research programme, work is not restricted to these countries alone. Other research sites were included where a given conflict has an important transnational dimension. This is the case in the Great Lakes Region, where

Hub research also addresses the situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Sudan; with regard to the Middle East, where work packages based in Lebanon and Iraq necessarily deal with the contemporary politics of Turkey, Syria and Jordan; and in relation to dynamics of violence in South and Southeast Asia that span Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal and the Philippines. Critical and comparative examinations of the UK context, most notably Northern Ireland, are also present in several Hub projects.

The following sections provide an overview of the Hub's seven focus countries, including background information on the conflict context and key challenges, and an overview of research findings and recommendations drawn directly from the Hub's research projects. A more detailed exploration of each project is presented in Chapters Four to Nine, which are organised by research stream.

Photo Credit: Farid Ershad on Unsplash

3.1 **Afghanistan**

This country brief draws on the following projects: Culture and Conflict; Gender and Forced Displacement; Return, Reintegration and Political restructuring and Gendered Dynamics of International Labour Migrants.

Country Context

Protracted and Ongoing Conflict: Afghanistan has endured many decades of violence, including Soviet occupation, civil war, international military intervention and Taliban control. This protracted conflict and political instability has roots in foreign interventions and ideological struggle and is influenced by ethnic and religious tensions. The Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s, followed by civil unrest and the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s, led to extensive and often extreme violence, including against civilians. More recently, the U.S. led invasion in 2001, which sought to dismantle al-Qaeda and remove the Taliban from power, resulted in a long-term military occupation, more political instability and more violence. Within the broader struggle for peace, the struggle for gender equality and women's rights remains critical, but in this highly patriarchal and unstable context it remains an immense challenge.

Fraught Progress Toward Peace: Peace in Afghanistan has been intermittently negotiated though international diplomacy and various agreements, including the Doha Agreement of 2020, a power-sharing arrangement signed by the U.S. government and the Taliban, which included provision for the full withdrawal of all foreign troops. In the decades before this, the Afghan government, with international support, made attempts at reform, including initiatives to address human rights, improving governance and some measures to address entrenched patriarchal gender norms and the marginalisation of women. However, corruption, lack of infrastructure, and ongoing violence hindered these efforts.

Taliban Control: On August 15, 2021, the Taliban captured the capital city, Kabul, marking a crucial turning point in the Afghan conflict. It came as the U.S. was in the final stages of military withdrawal, ending a 20-year presence in the country. While the Taliban victory ended the war, violence has persisted, and civilian casualties have continued. The consequences of conflict remain for the Afghan population, with many displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance. This event has profound implications for Afghanistan's future, and for gender, justice and security in the region.

Rolling Back Limited Progress on Gender: Under the Taliban regime, there have been significant rollbacks of women's rights and freedoms. The slow but important progress that had been made in the last two decades, including gains in education, employment and political participation for women and girls, faces severe threats. Gender-based violence and restrictions on women's movement and autonomy are becoming more widespread, while retrenchment of patriarchal and conservative gender norms put women and the LGBTIQ+ community at severe risk of discrimination, marginalisation and violence.

The GJS Hub in Afghanistan

The Hub's work in the region has used a range of research methods, including qualitative interviews and policy analysis, to explore the intersection of gender, justice and security. Projects also used several innovative participatory methods, such as storytelling, photography, and other forms of visual art. These approaches sought to create space for women and communities, especially those who are often marginalised, to articulate their experiences of conflict in ways that traditional research methods may not have encouraged.

The Challenges

Large-Scale Displacement and Loss of Homes: At the outset of the Hub's work in Afghanistan mass displacement had resulted in loss of homes and widespread community insecurity. This displacement presented significant challenges to individual and community wellbeing and the continuity of daily life.

Cultural Identity Preservation Amidst Displacemen: Displaced communities face the challenge of preserving their cultural identity, including language, narratives and traditional crafts, which are at risk of being lost in the process of displacement and resettlement.

Economic Instability and Lack of Sustainable Livelihoods: Displaced populations, particularly women, face economic instability with limited access to income-generating activities. Providing sustainable livelihood opportunities is essential to address poverty and economic dependency.

Gender-Specific Challenges in Conflict Zones: Women in conflict and displacement settings in Afghanistan encounter unique challenges related to safety, reduced decision-making power and restricted access to resources, all of which are exacerbated by the patriarchal cultural and social norms in the country.

Peacebuilding and Reconstruction Capacity: In Afghanistan, there is a crucial need for peacebuilding and reconstruction. The Hub projects aimed to explore how culture-specific knowledge, particularly women's skills in crafts, could contribute to these efforts.

Health and Hygiene Accessibility: Access to basic health and hygiene facilities is a major challenge, more so for women and girls who have specific health needs and face difficulties due to displacement.

Integration and Social Inclusion: The integration of displaced people into new communities or regions while maintaining their cultural identity poses a complex challenge, especially in terms of social inclusion and acceptance.

Key Findings

Cultural Identity and Craft

Women's craft, especially embroidery, plays a crucial role in preserving cultural identity, irrespective of the Taliban and interference from Western powers. Embroideries, like charmadozi and khammakdozi, are an important a source of income but also carry immense cultural significance, representing a form of tacit knowledge passed down through generations, and helping women maintain a sense of community and identity amid conflict and displacement.

Craftmaking and Livelihood

Craftmaking is a vital lifeline for women who remain in Afghanistan and who are banned from employment, professional spaces and education. For women who remain inside Afghanistan, craft making from within the home is one of the only options for generating income.

Documenting Cultural Practices

Little documentation of material cultures and practices exists outside of oral. Prior to the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, one focus of the Hub's work was documenting the practices of craft making, which are embodied and not documented, spoken publicly about or valued outside of the home and communities. There is little recognition of the high degree of knowledge and complex skills of making within national level policies.

Intergenerational Knowledge and Skills

Intergenerational learning contributes to psychosocial wellbeing and strengthens family ties and community relationships. Intergenerational teaching, for example, girls watching and learning how to make crafts from women within their family or neighbourhood, is an opportunity for exchange, building and maintaining relationships and passing on cultural knowledge.

Gendered Distribution of Labour in Craftmaking

Those who make products such as kilims/rugs and carpets – are seen as labourers and tend to be women whereas the design content is done by men. This creates a gender hierarchy within the practice that extends through to the financial management and control of any income generated.

Adaptation During COVID-19 and After the Taliban Takeover

The pandemic forced changes in research methods and support strategies for Afghan craft practices. It also highlighted the resilience and adaptability of these cultural practices, even under challenging conditions like reduced funding, increased health risks and changing political and conflict settings. After August 2021, using a web and phone app to provide logistical support to sell through an online platform and to fly out goods from Kabul has enabled the work to continue.

Key Findings continued

Economic Challenges and Opportunities

With the economic fragility and shrinking economy in Afghanistan, focusing work on livelihoods became more critical. An increasing number of women joined the Hub's project focused on income generation through craft sales. This economic participation provided not only financial support but also a sense of empowerment and community involvement.

The Gendered Impact of Displacement

There are differences in asset ownership, decision-making authority and access to services for women and men in contexts of displacement. Women faced greater and distinctly gendered challenges indicating a need for gender-specific support and policies.

Displaced Women and Girls Continue Craftmaking

Some women in Hub research projects were able to flee from Afghanistan to Pakistan as their rights were rolled back, mobility restricted and security threatened after August 2021. Women who live in Pakistan as refugees have started practicing craftmaking skills from within refugee camps. This is both for income generation and as a form of maintaining links to their identity and history.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

In the surveys conducted before the Taliban's return to power, both men and women reported high levels of anxiety and concern for the future, reflecting the widespread mental health challenges among displaced populations. This finding underscores the need for mental health support tailored to the unique stresses of displacement, uncertainty, and ongoing insecurity.

Health and Hygiene Access

Access to basic health and hygiene facilities, especially for women, remains severely limited. The lack of sanitary products and clean water access poses significant health risks, and there is a critical need for improved health and hygiene infrastructure throughout Afghanistan.

Educational Gaps and Early Marriage

Girls in Afghanistan have less access to education than boys. Before the Taliban regained control over national education laws and policy, which resulted in the restriction of school attendance for girls, early marriage was one of the most common reasons for non-attendance. This resulted in decreased opportunities for women and the perpetuation of cycles of gendered poverty and dependency.

Key Findings continued

Challenges for Afghan Migrant Women in Pakistan

Afghan migrant women in Pakistan face numerous barriers, including legal uncertainties, social isolation, and limited integration opportunities. Despite living in the country for extended periods, they often struggle with precarious legal status, impacting their access to education, healthcare, and employment.

Economic Challenges for Returnees

Returnees to Afghanistan encounter various difficulties, such as finding employment and dealing with bureaucracy. Women face greater economic challenges in reintegration, often due to gender norms and limited opportunities to participate in the job market.

Discrimination and Safety Concerns for Returnees

Returnees report discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, language, and political views. Women are particularly vulnerable to safety concerns, facing harassment and feeling unsafe, especially in public spaces or when traveling alone.

Recommendations

Prior to the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, the Hub's policy and practice recommendations regarding gender, justice and security in Afghanistan focused on promoting women's rights and improving the lives of marginalised groups through participatory research and activism, legal reforms and inclusive governance at the local, national and international levels. These recommendations sought to build a more equitable society, encouraging significant and sustained international support for gender equality, access to education and economic opportunities and political participation for women.

However, under Taliban rule, many of these recommendations cannot realistically be implemented due to the regime's extremely restrictive policies. Legal reforms and justice mechanisms that had been established to protect women's rights have now been dismantled or are ignored, leading to increased gender-based violence and many forms of discrimination. Women's rights, including freedom of movement, right to work, access to education and possibility to participate in public life are severely restricted.

Despite this, the recommendations, which were developed by Hub projects prior to 2021, remain useful for several reasons. First, they provide a framework and a benchmark for future advocacy and policymaking, highlighting the baseline standards that international and Afghan stakeholders can strive to re-establish. Second, they serve as a documentation of the work done, the progress made and the specific challenges faced, which can inform current and future humanitarian and development efforts in the region and elsewhere. Third, these recommendations intend to keep the global community's focus on the rights and needs of Afghan women and marginalised groups. Finally, the Hub has continued to work with partners in Afghanistan, which has provided valuable insights and lessons learned that can aid in crafting strategies for resilience and support under the current regime, and for potential future opportunities for reform and transformation.

Recommendations up to August 2021

Afghan Government and Policymakers

- **Economic Empowerment:** Develop and support programmes for the economic empowerment of displaced women, particularly in the craft sector.

- **Educational Programmes:** Implement policies and programmes to prevent early marriage and promote girls' education.

- **Reducing Discrimination in Education:** Review and amend community education policy and practices to combat discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, and language.

- **Mental Health Services:** Establish mental health services that are accessible to displaced populations, with a focus on addressing the unique stressors for these communities and to women and girls in them.

UN Agency, International NGOs and Humanitarian Actors

- **Women's Health:** Prioritise women's health initiatives, including antenatal and reproductive health services.

- **Basic Needs and Sanitation:** Advocate for and provide access to clean water, sanitation facilities, and food security to mitigate health crises.

- **Peace and Reconciliation Advocacy:** Advocate for peace processes in Afghanistan, especially focusing on women's inclusion, while encouraging engagement with Afghan people who have existing relevant skills and experience.

- **Awareness of Rights and Access to Justice:** Raise awareness and improve understanding of women's rights and refugee rights and provide support in seeking access to them.

International Community and Host Countries

- **Support for Afghan Migrants and Returnees:** Assist Afghan returnees and migrants in terms of job placement, social integration and addressing poverty.

- **Skill Utilisation:** Identify and utilise the skills and qualifications of Afghan experts, particularly those who have been displaced, to contribute positively to their host communities and homeland.

- **Legal Protection for Migrants:** Strengthen legal protections for Afghan migrants, especially for women, and facilitate their integration and access to public services.

Recommendations after August 2021

External Governments, International NGOs and Organisations

- **Engage, Organise, and Mobilise Afghan Experts Inside Afghanistan and Across the Diaspora:** To support Afghans, in their homeland and in the region, the UN, host countries for Afghan refugees and organisations from the Afghan diaspora need to develop policies to identify Afghan experts and determine how to best capitalise on their social, human, cultural, and economic capital.

- **Exert Leverage to Catalyse the Stalled Peace Process:** The international community needs to use whatever leverage it has over the Taliban to pressure them to begin the stalled peace process and reconciliation with all facets of the society, especially with women and highly qualified individuals.

- **Shift the Narrative Around Afghanistan by Focusing on and Supporting Work That Draws on Women's Skills, Produces Financial Value and is Still Possible in the Current Situation:** Despite deep and sustained attacks on women's rights, security, and livelihoods, women continue to work, especially in modes that allow them to stay inside the home. To bolster this work, trade routes between Afghanistan and Pakistan are vital. International organisations should be working to maintain these trade routes to enable e.g. craft products to leave the country to generate income and NGOs should continue to support work that enables women to generate an income from their homes.

- **Include and Advocate for the Inclusion of Women in Political Processes:** Afghan women risk being erased from the ongoing dialogues about the future of their nation that are being held by the international community. A possible recognition of the Taliban in the coming years will make this erasure a large price that future generations of women might pay. All donors and policymakers should maintain the equality of all genders at the heart of their advocacy and policy.

- **Crisis Responses are Gender Blind and Need to be Aware of Intersectional Inequalities:** The crisis of 2021 made it clear that gender blind policies of protection, including evacuation and access to humanitarian visas and related safety, were gender blind. Related resettlement programmes also showed a lack of awareness of intersectional inequalities in Afghanistan. The Hub's Gender Intersectionality Crisis Toolkit addresses this gap in understanding and should be utilised and adapted in other contexts.

To learn more about Hub research in Afghanistan visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/publications/country-briefing-afghanistan/

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3.2 **Colombia**

This country brief draws on the following projects: Addressing Post-Colonial Legacies in Transitional Justice; Political Economy of Reconciliation; Women's Political and Economic Empowerment; Land Reform, Peace and Informal Institutions and From Female Combatants to Filmmakers – Expanding Women's Agency in War and Peace.

Country Context

Half a Century of Internal Conflict: Colombia has endured over fifty years of armed conflict, largely between government forces, paramilitary groups, organised crime and leftist guerrilla groups, such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). The roots of this conflict are complex, but inequalities in land distribution, political exclusion, drug trafficking, and lack of state presence in some areas of the country have all been significant factors. A major milestone was the peace agreement with the FARC in 2016, which promised to end the longest-running conflict in the Western Hemisphere. Despite this, the transition to peace has been fraught with challenges, including the reintegration of former combatants and ongoing violence.

Peace and Progress? Post-agreement, Colombia has taken steps towards reconciliation, including transitional justice mechanisms – particularly the Truth Commission and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace – to address the atrocities committed during the war. Efforts to restore land to the displaced and to substitute illegal crops have seen limited success, and violence persists in some regions where the state's presence is weak. Social leaders and human rights defenders continue to face threats and assassinations, highlighting the fragility of peace.

The country has also taken steps to improve the representation of women in politics and to address gender-based violence. However, disparities in access to health, education, and economic opportunities for women, particularly in rural areas, remain. The Colombian government, with the support of international entities and foreign governments, has been working on policies to enhance gender equality, though real change is incremental and uneven across different parts of the country.

Ongoing Security Challenges: While the peace deal with the FARC brought hope, security in Colombia continues to be a concern, with other armed groups filling the void left in previously FARC-controlled territories. The government's efforts to demobilise combatants and extend state control to all regions are ongoing, with varying degrees of success. Initiatives aimed at development and reconciliation are being implemented, but the process is difficult and slow-moving.

The situation is especially precarious for Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, who often find themselves caught in the crossfire of continuing conflicts. National and international bodies, including Colombia's Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the ICC, are working towards accountability for crimes committed during the conflict, but many Colombians are still waiting for justice and security.

The GJS Hub in Colombia

Gender issues in Colombia are deeply influenced by the armed conflict and by societal norms. Women and the LGBTIQ+ community have faced systemic violence and discrimination, with the conflict exacerbating these abuses. Understanding the nuanced relationship between gender, justice and security is critical for Colombia's continued journey towards peace and equality.

Across the Gender, Justice and Security Hub, our projects bring together researchers, practitioners and activists applying a broad set of qualitative and quantitative methods, which includes hundreds of interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, analysis and gender-disaggregation of historical data sets, facilitating arts-based workshops with conflict-affected women, participatory filmmaking and peer-to-peer interviews by female ex-combatants, international comparative research across post-colonial contexts, and the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data on the land restitution process and reconciliation.

The Challenges

Funding Challenges for Women's Organisations: Women's civil society organisations play a crucial role in advocating for public policy addressing gender-based violence and promoting the care economy. However, these organisations are grappling with chronic underfunding, a challenge further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Their work often focuses on areas that are not easily quantifiable, making it difficult to meet funding criteria that prioritise measurable deliverables. This issue is compounded by a tendency for donors to favour short-term projects, leaving long-term initiatives and research in these critical areas without adequate support.

Land Restitution and Transitional Justice in Colombia: Colombia's transitional justice framework includes measures to address the impacts of armed conflict on property and land tenure. Land restitution is a central component of this framework, aiming to return land to those displaced by conflict. Yet, despite its importance, the process has seen only marginal success. The failures are attributed to issues with both the design and the implementation of the restitution measures, which have not effectively reversed the injustices faced by the displaced population.

Challenges Faced by Female Ex-Combatants: The peace accord in Colombia included a focus on gender, but female ex-combatants continue to struggle with stigmatisation and economic hardship. These women find themselves with limited opportunities to establish sustainable livelihoods, leading to a sense of regression in gender equality compared to the inclusivity they experienced within the FARC. The societal reintegration process has not adequately addressed these issues, hindering the potential for long-term stability and equality.

Intersectionality and the Colombian Conflict: The concept of intersectionality is crucial to understanding the disproportionate effects of the Colombian conflict on social minorities, including women and ethnic minorities. Those who identify with more than one minority group face compounded forms of victimisation, such as sexual violence. Recognising how various forms of inequality intersect can lead to more effective responses to the specific challenges these groups face.

Intercultural Education and Social Activism: Intercultural education stands as a transformative force against entrenched racism and structural inequalities, which have been intensified by the conflict in Colombia. In particular, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian activists see it as a tool for change. While Colombia has initiated intercultural education through programmes for Ethno-education and Afro-Colombian studies, these initiatives are inadequately implemented and fail to reach their transformative potential.

Need for Gender-Disaggregated Data: A significant barrier to assessing and improving women's political and economic empowerment in Colombia is the lack of gender-disaggregated data. Many existing datasets do not account for gender differences, making it difficult to evaluate the impact of policies and laws intended to advance women's status. Without this data, it is challenging to develop effective strategies for enhancing women's roles in political and economic spheres.

Legal Reforms and Social Attitudes: Despite the establishment of several gender-sensitive legal frameworks as part of Colombia's peace process, many women remain unaware of these new rights and laws. Even for those who are informed, accessing these rights is often hindered by weak rule of law and negative societal attitudes toward gender reforms. There is a prevalent backlash against women who seek to exercise their rights, limiting the effectiveness of these legal advances.

Colonial Legacies and the Peace Process: The peace process in Colombia is steeped in the country's colonial history, which influences land claims, implementation of restitution and conservative opposition to change. Despite its pervasive impact, the peace accords have seldom addressed the role of colonialism. Ignoring these historical influences risks undermining the peace process and jeopardising the prospect of lasting peace.

Key Findings

Victims of Land Dispossession and Forced Abandonment

After 10 years of implementing the land restitution policy – designed to return land and formalise property rights – and with millions of victims of forced displacement registered, only 20.6% (26,940) of land restitution applications were seen before a judge, and even fewer resulted in land being returned to rightful owners. The slow and often flawed land restitution processes hinder peace efforts.

Women's Civil Society Organisations

Over the past five years, there has been a decline in international funding for and attention to women's rights, empowerment and gender equality. This trend has worsened in the context of challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic and global gender backlash, exacerbating issues in Colombia. With less funding available, CSOs are under pressure to alter their objectives to secure funding, leading to potential compromises in their expertise and intended impact areas.

Isolation and Exclusion of Female Ex-combatants

Women who have left armed groups face many complex challenges in reintegration, while their potential contributions to societal development and peacebuilding remain largely unacknowledged, under-utilised, and undervalued. Skills they have developed, such as managing conflict in a diverse group of people or pushing for gender equality in a male-dominated environment, are useful in a wider peacebuilding context. Instead, most ex-combatants face pressure to return to traditional gender roles after demobilisation.

Intersectionality and the Socio-Demographic Impact on Reconciliation

Experiences during conflict and current life situations, which are influenced by factors such as gender, income, and region, significantly affect an individual's perspective on reconciliation. Despite this, the Havana Peace Accord makes no reference to intersectionality. The three key Transitional Justice Institutions – the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-repetition (CEV) and Victims' Unit – each establish intersectionality as one of their guiding principles or approaches, and yet in practice they continue to employ a differential approach.

Key Findings continued

Limited Intercultural Education

The ethno-education programme is only available in areas where there is a high concentration of Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, limiting its reach. The Ministry of the Interior notes that less than 7% of Colombia's educational institutions have undergone the work necessary to develop the Afro-Colombian Studies programme.

Women's Political Empowerment

In Colombia, women's access to power is often dependent on their connections to political elites or power brokers, both during and before the conflict. Women's rights are frequently politicised, with political entities leveraging them for gain rather than genuine empowerment, leading to a disconnect between policy and practice.

Women's Economic Empowerment

Rural women encounter multiple barriers to economic empowerment, with substantial urban-rural disparities in access to education, land, credit and health services, which contribute to sustained economic inequality. Similar barriers are faced by female ex-combatants, which is also exacerbated by social stigma and other overlapping challenges.

Material vs. Symbolic Reparations

There is a profound disparity between the symbolic gestures offered by institutions and the material reparations expected and needed by communities, such as infrastructure improvements, which are necessary for material improvement of conditions but also for healing and rebuilding trust.

Legacies of Colonialism

The impact of colonialism on transitional justice in Colombia is an underexplored area that may offer insights into the current challenges facing the peace process. Although the CEV's Final Report refers to the colonial roots of inequalities that underpin the armed conflict, including the hacienda system and discrimination against Indigenous and Afro-descendant people, confronting the ongoing legacies of the colonial past is not included in the 74 final recommendations. This is a missed opportunity to deal with the structural causes of violence.

Recommendations

Government of Colombia

- **Responsive Reconciliation Policies:** Create reconciliation programmes that recognise and incorporate the complexities of individual experiences of conflict, focusing on providing targeted material reparations alongside symbolic acts. Ensure policies are adapted to the needs and perceptions of different social groups and experiences. For example, since women have concerns about their safety and livelihoods within the reconciliation process, this should be prioritised in reconciliation policies and efforts.

- **Economic Justice for Rural Women:** Enhance support systems for rural women, such as education and land rights, to address economic disparities and promote gender equality.

- **Transparent and Efficient Land Restitution:** Review and reform the land restitution process with a focus on transparency and efficiency, ensuring legal consistency and victim-centred outcomes. The Land Restitution Unit (URT) should review its policies and regulatory frameworks and make appropriate changes to ensure a victim-centred approach to land restitution; all cases of doubt should be resolved in favour of the victims.

- **Intersectional Approach to Justice Institutions:** The JEP, Victim's Unit, and Monitoring Committee of the CEV should prioritise an intersectional approach in their work wherever possible to fully understand the situation of particularly vulnerable people and provide appropriate mechanisms for redress.

- **Colonial Roots of Inequitable Justice:** When evaluating the implementation of the 74 final recommendations made by the CEV, the Monitoring Committee should consider the background of colonial legacies. This should be present throughout the report, and particularly when considering structural constraints on reconciliation.

- **Local Leadership and Intercultural Education:** Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities are disproportionately impacted by conflict. Their voices and local needs must be centred in the transitional justice process. Integrate local leaders in policy design and execution to ensure that programmes align with the specific needs and expectations of their communities. Strengthen and widen the two existing programmes – Ethno-education and the Afro-Colombian Studies Programme – to dismantle historic, racist attitudes that are still prevalent.

- **Reconciliation Expectations:** Conduct a national dialogue to clarify and define reconciliation, its scope, and its limits to ensure there is a unified and realistic expectation from the process.

Civil Society and International Actors

- **Sustainable and Flexible Funding Models:** Develop funding models that provide long-term support for women led CSOs, allowing for the continuation and scaling of successful programs and for resources to be allocated in ways that respond to changing context and needs.

- **Meaningful and Diverse Participation:** Ensure the participation of a diversity of women's groups – including female combatants, victims, Indigenous groups – in all aspects of peace implementation, from disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration to land rights, economic opportunity and transitional justice.

- **Capacity Building for Grassroots Organisations:** Allocate resources to strengthen members of marginalised groups and grassroots organisations, enhancing their ability to respond to community-specific needs with cultural competence and local knowledge. This includes reviewing funding eligibility guidelines to increase inclusivity of smaller/informal and grassroots organisations. Funding should be guaranteed for gender issues throughout the peace implementation process, with extended funding timeframes.

- **Intersectional and Holistic Gender Programming:** Avoid single-issue approaches to gender advocacy, which can perpetuate existing social and political hierarchies. Focus on violence perpetuated by interlinked structures of oppression experienced by minoritised women and groups, which includes programming that considers economic, social, cultural and environmental rights.

Researchers

- **Intersectional Analysis:** Future research should apply intersectional analyses to understand how overlapping social identities, including gender, race, ethnicity and class, affect post-conflict experiences and long-term recovery.

- **Colonial Influences on Transitional Justice:** A gap remains in understanding how historical colonialism influences contemporary social and political dynamics within peace processes. Research that seeks to address this question should itself take a decolonial methodological approach and engage with Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

To learn more about Hub research in Colombia visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/publications/country-briefing-colombia/

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3.3 **Kurdistan-Iraq**

This country brief draws on the following projects: Transitional Masculinity, Violence and Prevention; Return, Reintegration and Political Restructuring; Gendered Dynamics of International Labour Migration and Gender and Forced Displacement.

Regional Context

Unresolved Tensions in Kurdistan-Iraq: Kurdistan-Iraq has endured over fifty years of instability, marked by conflicts between Kurdish groups, the Iraqi government and neighbouring countries. These disputes are rooted in complex historical and socio-political dynamics, including issues of ethnic identity, control over natural resources and the Kurdish struggle for independence and self-governance.

Efforts for Peace and Autonomy: The semiautonomous region of Kurdistan was established in 1992, one year after the end of the Gulf War (1990-1991), representing a significant step towards Kurdish self-governance. However, the path to stability has been hindered by internal divisions among Kurdish factions, disputes with the Iraqi central government over territory and oil revenues, and external pressures from neighbouring countries concerned about Kurdish separatism. The rise and fall of the Islamic State added another layer of complexity, with Kurdish forces playing a key role in combating the group.

Continuing Security and Political Challenges: The security situation in Kurdistan-Iraq remains fragile, with ongoing tensions with Iraqi central authorities and threats from various armed groups, including remnants of the Islamic State and Kurdish militant factions. Efforts to maintain stability and extend governmental control throughout the region continue amidst a challenging political landscape. The situation is particularly complex for minority communities within Kurdistan, who must strike a difficult balance between Kurdish nationalism and their own cultural and political rights. International organisations and regional powers are involved in various capacities, seeking to support stability and autonomy in Kurdistan while maintaining broader geopolitical interests.

Gender Equality and Social Development: In contrast to many parts of Iraq and the surrounding region, Kurdistan-Iraq made notable advances in promoting women's rights and participation in public life. The Kurdish government has implemented policies aimed at enhancing women's rights and representation, but progress has been uneven and faces cultural and institutional barriers and backlashes. Many challenges remain in establishing and sustaining meaningful gender equality, particularly in rural areas.

The Hub in Kurdistan-Iraq

The Hub projects in Kurdistan-Iraq explore complex social issues centred around gender dynamics, labour and human rights in a challenging environment, particularly in the context of ongoing conflict and displacement. Together these projects aim to better understand how gender roles and identities influence and are influenced by societal, economic and political factors in the region.

Through arts-based methods and ethnographic studies, complemented by extensive literature reviews and comparative analyses, the Hub's projects offer a rich, diverse, and contextually relevant understanding of gender, justice and security issues in the region. This multi-method and interdisciplinary approach not only captures a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives but also actively engages local communities and a wide range of stakeholders in the research process.

The Hub's projects highlight the interconnectedness of local experiences with global trends and issues. They contribute to engendering meaningful change by challenging gender norms and fostering critical discussions on gender, rights and labour issues, while also influencing policy and practice to improve the lives of those impacted by conflict and displacement in Kurdistan-Iraq.

The Challenges

Gender Backlash: There have been important legal reforms in relation to violence against women, family law, and political participation in Kurdistan-Iraq. However, there is simultaneously a growing backlash against the advancement of gender studies and women's rights discourse accompanied by harassment of activists across the region.

Gender Disparities in Health and Education: In Kurdistan-Iraq, women had previously achieved higher levels of education, but displacement has caused considerable losses in human and social capital, with women and girls disproportionately affected, especially in education. Displacement has also severely impacted access to healthcare, clean water, and reproductive health for women and girls in Kurdistan-Iraq.

Lack of Funding for Women's Rights: There has been a significant decline in international funding and attention towards women's rights, empowerment, and gender equality. This decline, alongside the emergence of other global challenges, has intensified the challenges faced by initiatives focused on women's rights.

Return Migration: Research on return migration generally focusses on return to politically and economically stable countries. However, we know far less about the gendered experience of return migration to contexts that continue to endure conflict, like Kurdistan-Iraq, and how this relates to development, gender rights, justice and peace.

Key Findings

Barriers to Progress for Women

There is a lack of genuine will by the Kurdish authorities to improve women's rights; failure of the judiciary system to implement reformed laws, specifically in cases where perpetrators are politically or tribally connected; failure of the education system to promote gender equality; with the media contributing to discrimination, reproducing gender stereotypes and siding against the women's movement.

Persistent Patriarchal Views and Gender Backlash

There remains a deep-rooted belief in men's right to control and 'own' women, which is reflected in language, cultural norms, practices and social structures. Alongside the gender backlash, there has been a noticeable resurgence of patriarchal views. Many factors contribute to this, but gender-focused aid programs have at times inadvertently reinforced patriarchal norms.

Harassment of Women's Rights Activists

Driven by sexist and politically motivated social media, patriarchal and conservative religious norms, or misconceptions of feminism, the backlash and defamation campaigns against feminist activists become particularly visible whenever there is an incident of gender injustice.

Displacement Discourse Misalignment

There is a significant gap between global discourse on displacement and the ground realities in regions like Kurdistan-Iraq. International policies often are not reflected in local laws, policies and actual conditions faced by displaced persons, leading to ineffective or misaligned interventions.

Complex Influences of Return Migration

Return becomes feasible, profitable or both for multiple intersecting reasons. On the one hand, there are experiences or conditions in host countries including living conditions, racism and discrimination. On the other, there are conditions in the origin county, such as political, economic and social changes. There are also individual factors, such as personal relationships, resources and the relevance of their acquired skills to the host country or Kurdistan's development priorities and integration policies.

Returnees Contribute to the Labour Market

Skilled returning migrants, especially women, are comparatively younger, better educated and more able to commute between countries. Most returnees find a job that matches their level of education, including in public administration, the health sector, social services and the private sector.

Returnees Contribute to Peace, Development and Gender Equality

Together with their remittances, knowledge of the host country and skills and training, returnees are successful in using their human, social and cultural capital to have a positive impact in Kurdistan-Iraq. Although female returnees face discrimination based on their gender, lifestyle, political views, ethnicity and age, they play a crucial role in the fight for gender equality and contribute to peace and development.

Recommendations

Regional Government of Kurdistan-Iraq

- **Engaging Men and Challenging Patriarchal Norms:** Increase funding and resources for local initiatives that focus on engaging men, specifically regarding those in positions of power, to challenge patriarchal norms and resist the growing gender backlash.

- **Viable and Sustainable Policies for Returnees:** Many post-conflict countries have already established policies to attract their citizens or second generations to return and fill gaps in the labour market. The Kurdistan Regional Government should assess these policies and draw from them to develop sustainable and viable policies with the aim of encouraging highly skilled men and women to return to Kurdistan and contribute to economic development and peace.

- **Engaging with Diaspora:** Establish a Diaspora Affairs Department to engage with and benefit from the human, cultural, social and economic capital of the largest communities of Kurdish diaspora in Western countries; identify evidence of labour shortages; build networks of potential returnees and assess their potential contribution to sustainable development.

- **Focusing on the Rights and Contributions of Women Returnees:** Work with non-governmental partners to establish and implement positive policies for women and to benefit from the skills of women returnees. These should drive forward diversity and gender equality and remove barriers that prevent returnees, particularly women, from playing an important role in decision-making processes at local and national levels.

International Actors

- **Implement Gender-Inclusive Policies:** Work with regional and local actors to develop and implement displacement policies that account for gender-specific needs and challenges, with a focus on empowerment and skill acquisition for displaced women and girls.

- **Gender Sensitive Training on Forced Displacement:** Support and facilitate training programmes at the national and local levels to ensure a deep understanding of gender issues in displacement contexts, aiding in the creation of more effective support systems.

Local Communities and Educators

- **Community-Led Solutions:** Empower local leaders and educators to spearhead discussions on gender norms and establish community-driven responses to address these issues effectively.

- **Education as a Tool for Change:** Integrate comprehensive gender equality education into curriculums at schools, mosques and other learning platforms. Focus on engaging younger generations to shape future societal norms and engaging men to highlight the positive role they can play as gender equality allies within the community.

- **Arts-Based Approaches:** Implement creative and arts-based methods in educational settings to foster empathy, challenge established gender norms and promote a re-evaluation of gender identities.

Media, Funders and the General Public

- **Coordinated Multi-Actor Approaches:** Achieving gender equality is not the responsibility of NGOs and activists alone, and it will not be possible without the engagement of the larger community. An effective approach necessitates coordinated responses from the government, the NGO sector, funders and donors, the media and the larger community.

Researchers and Academics

- **Ongoing Engagement with Participants:** Maintain continuous interaction with research participants, particularly men, to reinforce positive changes in perspectives on gender equality.

- **Cultural Sensitivity in Research:** Approach research with a deep understanding of the local context, addressing the intersections of gender, religion and cultural norms sensitively and effectively.

- **Valuing the Research Process:** Emphasise the importance of the research process, focusing on building relationships that redistribute power and value the complex experiences of research subjects, including their traumas and aspirations.

To learn more about Hub research in Kurdistan-Iraq visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/publications/country-briefing-kurdistan-iraq/

3.4 **Lebanon**

This country brief draws on the following projects: Changing SOGIE in Conflict, Peace and Displacement in the MENA and Gendered Dynamics of International Labour Migration.

Country Context

Unrest in the Shadow of Civil War: The 1975-1990 Lebanese Civil War, which involved a multitude of sectarian militias and foreign actors, left Lebanese society fractured and the state in disarray. Though it ended almost 35 years ago, the legacy of the civil war, along with conflicts in neighbouring countries, particularly in Syria and in Israel and Palestine, and severe economic issues have perpetuated a state of unrest and insecurity in Lebanon. The protracted economic and banking crisis, which has been exacerbated by political impasse and a massive explosion at the Beirut port in August 2020, poses a significant threat to the country's stability and security. It has led to widespread protests against the ruling class, which is seen by many as corrupt and incapable of governing effectively. It has also made life extremely difficult for many Lebanese people, with basic services and commodities becoming unaffordable or unavailable.

Peace and Progress? In the post-war period, there have been attempts at recovery, rebuilding and reform in Lebanon. The Taif Agreement in 1989 laid the groundwork for ending the civil war and returning to political stability, but it has been limited in its impact by periods of political paralysis, economic crisis, and social discord. Progress in areas such as infrastructure, governance, and public services has been uneven, and it has been hindered by corruption and the deep-seated sectarian divisions that remain. Efforts to address past atrocities have also been very limited, and while there have been some moves towards social liberalisation, political representation remains skewed by sectarian affiliations.

Ongoing Security Challenges: The security situation in Lebanon is volatile, and Hezbollah remains as a powerful military and political entity. Tensions along the border with Israel and the spill over from the Syrian war, including a massive influx of refugees, have added to the security challenges. The Israeli assault on Gaza since October 7, 2023 and Hezbollah's response along the border, has caused displacement of thousands of people in Lebanon, and while the Lebanese Armed Forces work alongside UN peacekeeping operations to maintain a fragile stability, periodic escalations of violence are a constant threat to peace.

The GJS Hub in Lebanon

Gender issues in Lebanon are complex; while there have been notable periods of advancement in women's education and participation in the workforce, political representation remains low, and personal status laws differ significantly across religious groups, affecting rights related to marriage, divorce and inheritance. The 2019 protests showed that there is a widespread demand for change, with women playing a significant role, yet entrenched societal and political structures pose challenges to gender equality.

The political and economic crises have threatened the limited social progress made in previous years. Women and marginalised communities, including refugees and the LGBTIQ+ community, are particularly vulnerable in the current climate. Although Lebanon is known for being more liberal than some of its neighbours in terms of women's and LGBTIQ+ rights, the economic collapse has had a detrimental impact on these advances. Moreover, the entrenched sectarian power-sharing system often impedes comprehensive and progressive social reforms.

Hub research in Lebanon explores the dynamics of conflict, displacement, gender and labour migration, including the influences of the Syrian Civil War, the COVID-19 pandemic, economic crises and significant socio-political events like the Beirut port explosion. Hub projects investigated the impacts of these crises on individuals of diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Expressions, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC), and the experiences of migrant women in a broad spectrum of labour sectors.

Research methods included interviews and focus group discussions with SOGIESC individuals in Lebanon, and interviews with women and NGO workers across multiple cities. The research offers insights into the direct and indirect effects of conflict, displacement, economic challenges and migration on women and people of SOGIESC in Lebanon. It focuses on the lived experiences of these communities and individuals, and their rights, agency and interactions with urban spaces, against the backdrop of gender backlash and socio-cultural drivers influencing migration in these volatile contexts.

The Challenges

Women Migrant Workers and South-South Migration: Though there are many women migrant workers in Lebanon, there is a lack of gender-sensitive understanding of the interaction between economic and socio-cultural drivers of labour migration, including experiences of gender discrimination and the living and working conditions of migrants. There is also a need to shift away from a victimisation narrative that sees migrant women only as victims of the process of migration.

Critical Gap in Research and Policymaking: There is little research available that analyses the cumulative, direct and indirect impacts on SOGIESC individuals in these contexts. Their experiences, needs, access to resources and the ways in which different aspects of their intersectional identities impact their lives during times of conflict and crisis is therefore poorly understood, which is reflected in policy.

Educational Achievements and Employment Challenges: Despite often holding high educational qualifications, migrant women in Lebanon face challenges in finding jobs that match their skills. This discrepancy highlights the undervaluing of migrant women's education and the barriers they encounter in the local job market.

Lebanon's Triple Crises: The COVID-19 pandemic hit Lebanon in a moment of profound political instability and economic collapse, which was further exacerbated by the August 2020 port explosion. Little is known about the impact of this triple crisis on the employment and life of women migrant workers in the country.

SOGIESC Visibility and State Harassment: In Lebanon, visible SOGIESC individuals, particularly trans women, face intense social discrimination and marginalisation. Increased visibility often results in harassment by state authorities, including targeted attacks on LGBTIQ+ organisations. Available research suggest that the Syrian Civil War has increased the prevalence of different forms violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination faced by persons of SOGIESC in Lebanon.

Key Findings

Lebanon's Labour Law Offers No Protection to Migrant Workers

Migrant domestic workers – from Ethiopia, other African countries, and Asian countries – are not protected by Lebanese labour law and, under the private employment sponsorship system (kafala), their rights are easily violated.

Migrant Domestic Workers Have Agency

Migrant women exhibit agency in their choice to leave their country of origin as well as within the unfair kafala system in Lebanon. However, they are trapped in circular migration patterns, which hamper their socio-cultural integration in the country. The number of people exiting the private employment sponsorship systems and settling in the country is growing.

Undocumented Migrants are at Increased Risk of Human Trafficking

Undocumented migrants from Syria, fleeing gender-based discrimination and violence and the armed conflict, often fall into the informal labour market, including the sex industry. This unregulated and stigmatised sector makes migrants vulnerable to abuse and violation of their sexual and reproductive health rights. Third sector assistance remains insufficient.

Gender Discrimination Against LGBTIQ+ Persons, Especially Undocumented Syrian Refugees

The conditions that they find in Lebanon are perceived as far better than those they fled from in Syria. However, Lebanon is not the country of freedom and tolerance in relation to LGBTIQ+ rights that they were looking for, meaning it is a stop along their migration journey and they must keep moving.

Importance of Personal Networks

Migrant women rely heavily on personal networks, based on nationality, for support and information in Lebanon. These networks serve as crucial resources for navigating life and work, illustrating the significance of community ties among migrant populations.

The Role of Professional Migrant Women in Lebanon Requires Further Investigation

South-South skilled migrant circuits, which involve generational mobility between Levantine countries and Gulf countries, notably the UAE, are understudied. Their contribution to the host country deserves further investigation.

Key Findings continued

Impact of Lebanon's Triple Crisis on Migrants

The economic downturn, Beirut port explosion and COVID-19 pandemic have disproportionately affected migrant women, exacerbating their vulnerabilities. These crises have led to increased unemployment, isolation, and incidents of gender-based violence, significantly altering the migrant experience in Lebanon.

Lebanon's Triple Crisis Compounds Discrimination Against Persons of Diverse SOGIESC

The triple crisis has compounded the ostracisation, harassment and discrimination of persons of diverse SOGIESC, who have experienced misogynistic, lesbophobic, homophobic, transphobic or xenophobic behaviour. The economic crisis has pushed many persons of diverse SOGIESC further into the margins of the economy, and COVID-19 prevention measures have hit hard, especially for people dependent on sex work for survival. The increasing socio-economic strain has contributed to increased anti-refugee and anti-diverse SOGIESC sentiments.

Transience and Social Connectedness

The transient nature of their stay in Lebanon influences migrant women's integration and social engagement. This perception of temporariness affects their investment in local connections and utilisation of public spaces, underscoring the challenges of circular migration patterns.

A Shift Away from the Exploitative Kafala System

There are a growing number of migrant domestic workers outside of the exploitative kafala system in what might be the start of a bottom-up, freelancer-based alternative that could be a fairer system.

Psychosocial Support Gaps

The scarcity of psychosocial support for SOGIESC individuals in Lebanon is alarming, with mental health crises and suicide rates increasing among these communities. There is an urgent need for accessible, comprehensive mental health services tailored to their experiences and challenge.

Recommendations

Government of Lebanon

- **Enhance Legal Protections:** Strengthening legal protections against gender-based violence is imperative. The Lebanese government should enact and enforce laws that safeguard migrant women in both public and private spheres, offering them security and justice. This includes improving migrant women's access to legal recourse and strengthening support services that are essential for their empowerment and safety.

- **Abolish Discriminatory Laws and Strengthen Legal Protections:** Article 534 in the Penal Code criminalises homosexual acts. This, and other laws that criminalise sex workers, should be abolished. Implementing legal reforms to protect the rights of SOGIESC individuals is imperative for creating a more inclusive and safer environment where all citizens can live freely without fear of discrimination or persecution.

Cross-Sector Collaboration

- **Reform the Kafala System:** The Lebanese government, with support from international bodies (including the League of Arab States, Gulf Cooperation Council and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) must urgently overhaul the kafala system. Such work is critical to protecting domestic workers' rights, ensuring their inclusion under Lebanon's labour laws, and eliminating the exploitation and abuse prevalent under the current framework. The UN Human Rights Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa (ROMENA) should also support multi-stakeholder negotiations in these efforts.

- **Advance Migrant Rights and Safety:** A coordinated approach involving the Lebanese government, NGOs and international organisations is necessary to protect and enhance the rights of migrant women. By working together, these entities can create a more inclusive, safe and supportive environment for female migrants, addressing the systemic barriers they face in Lebanon.

- **Support Migrant-Centred Programmes:** The Lebanese government should collaborate with NGOs on programmes that offer job training, legal assistance and social support to migrant communities. Prioritising economic empowerment and integration efforts can significantly improve the lives of migrant women in Lebanon.

Governments of Migrant Workers' Country of Origin

- **Bilateral Migration Agreements:** The governments of migrant domestic workers' country of origin are called to take action and negotiate bilateral agreements with the Lebanese government to provide fairer conditions for their migrant citizens. Multilateral action is now even more urgent considering the impact of the Lebanese triple crisis on migrant domestic workers.

Policymakers and Lebanese NGOs

- **Adopt an Intersectional Approach:** Lebanese policymakers and NGOs should embrace an intersectional lens to understand the complexities of SOGIESC identities. Recognising the diversity within these communities is crucial for developing policies and support services that cater to their specific needs, particularly in addressing the intersections of gender, sexuality, socio-economic status and legal status.

- **Support Transnational Activism:** Encourage and facilitate transnational activism and collaboration among SOGIESC organisations across the region. Sharing strategies, resources and support can strengthen the resilience and effectiveness of the SOGIESC movement in Lebanon and beyond, promoting a united front for rights and recognition.

- **Increase Sustainable Funding:** Lebanon urgently needs to increase sustainable funding for SOGIESC-focused services, especially in mental health and psychosocial support. This funding should aim to build the capacity of local organisations to provide comprehensive care and support, ensuring that SOGIESC individuals can access the resources they need to navigate their challenges.

To learn more about Hub research in Lebanon visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/publications/country-brief-lebanon/

Photo Credit: Land Policy, Gender and Plural Legal Systems Project

3.5 **Sierra Leone**

This country brief draws on the following project:
Land Policy, Gender and Plural Legal Systems.

Country Context

A Decade of Civil War: The Sierra Leone civil war, which began in 1991, stemmed from multiple intersecting factors. Disputes over diamond-rich territories, political instability, government corruption, economic inequality and resource mismanagement issues all played a part in marginalising certain ethnic groups and regions. The decade of fighting, primarily between the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and Sierra Leone Army (SLA), was characterised by widespread atrocities, significant loss of life, recruitment of child soldiers and mass displacement of civilians. Multiple regional and international military and peacekeeping interventions laid the foundations for The Lomé Peace Accord between the SLA and RUF, which was signed in 1999, though fighting continued in some parts of the country until 2002.

Peace and Progress? The civil war resulted in social, economic, and political devastation, and since the end of the conflict, Sierra Leone has faced severe challenges, with a significant portion of the population living in poverty. Continued reliance on mining and agriculture leaves the country vulnerable to global market fluctuations and environmental changes. Despite this, the country has made substantial efforts towards justice and reconciliation. The Special Court for Sierra Leone and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which were established to address wartime atrocities, have sought to prosecute war criminals and provide a forum for victims' voices to be heard. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives has been hindered by lack of resources and issues in implementation.

Ongoing Security Challenges: Security in the nation has gradually improved in the two decades since the conflict's end. Reconstructing the local police force and military, and implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for former combatants have been important parts of this process. Yet, Sierra Leone continues to face security issues, including occasional outbreaks of violence and a fragile, under-resourced justice system.

The Gendered Legacy of War: The conflict, the economic impact of it and the retrenchment of patriarchal gender norms have worsened existing gender inequality in Sierra Leone. Women and girls suffered, and continue to suffer, disproportionately from the effects of the war, which includes high levels of sexual and gender-based violence, economic and political marginalisation, and lack of access to justice. Despite grassroots work, international interventions and legislative efforts (including the three Gender Acts of 2007) throughout the two decades of peace, pervasive gender inequality persists.

The GJS Hub in Sierra Leone

The GJS Hub research in Sierra Leone is led by the Land Policy, Gender and Plural Legal Systems research project. This project uses qualitative fieldwork and empirical analysis to critically examine: (1) socio-legal and policy frameworks of land governance, (2) engagement and adaptation of customary tenure, (3) tenurial constraints and opportunities and (4) current policy positions and reform debates in Sierra Leone. Although the project examines the tenure rights of vulnerable people in general, it focuses specifically on the tenurial (in)security of women, the structures and practices that shape women's land rights, and their experiences of pluralistic legal regimes.

The Challenges

Corporate Land Interests are Prioritised over Gender Justice: Sierra Leone's economic recovery and development strategy has prioritised foreign direct investment and private sector-led growth. However, there is a lack of political will to prioritise or balance gender justice with corporate interest in land, meaning post-war development has come at the expense of women's land rights and livelihood.

Limited Access to Land Rights for Women: Several legislative and policy changes have been made to ensure women in Sierra Leone have equal opportunity to own, access and use land. While these are progressive changes, they have had very little impact in local communities due to poor implementation and structural issues. Women in rural areas still experience significant gender-based barriers to exercising their tenurial rights to family and communal land, which continues to be governed by customary law.

Continued Gender Inequality in Land Governance: Patriarchal norms and practices continue to influence decision-making structures in Sierra Leone. This is a barrier to women's representation in decision-making processes and it limits their participation in development planning. Women do not have equal representation in negotiations with foreign companies or state and traditional authorities, which in turn means their interests, needs, and challenges are neglected.

No Effective Access to Justice: Sierra Leone has implemented justice sector reform programmes intended to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of state institutions (e.g., courts and police). However, the system still does not provide speedy, accessible and affordable land dispute resolution. This is compounded by grievances related to land dispossession, environmental degradation, and labour issues as companies acquire rural land for their operations.

No Post-Conflict Transformative Change of Economic and Democratic Processes: Sierra Leone's post-war peacebuilding and democratisation processes have been relatively successful. However, these reforms have not transformed the political and social system itself, which continues to concentrate power and resources in a small class of people. State institutions like the judiciary and police are still prone to being hijacked by the ruling elite to consolidate power and exclude political opponents from governance. The economic system still does not allow for fair distribution of wealth, particularly to marginalised groups, such as youth and rural women.

Key Findings

Land Access and Discrimination

Poverty, gender and regional location influence who has access to land. Poverty is the main factor limiting access to and acquisition of land, followed by being a migrant or non-local in a community. This is particularly the case for women who, to different extents depending on their location, also face cultural patriarchal norms restricting their tenurial rights to family and communal land.

Land Disputes and Inequitable Representation

Post-war competition for land has led to major land-related disputes, the most prominent being land grabbing by corporate actors from the poor or those with little or no access to justice. While not systematic across the country, women disproportionally have insufficient access to representation in land dispute mechanisms.

Post-War Economics and Possibilities for Gender Justice

The conflict and subsequent commercialisation of land has shifted the way local communities identify with and measure the value of land. In some ways, this has opened conversations about inclusive ownership and access, with women advocating for themselves in family and community discussions. In this sense, post-war economic recovery is challenging patriarchal norms and traditions regarding land rights and governance.

Resurgent Capitalism and Inequality

While patriarchy is being challenged, capitalism is being reinforced. Although women have begun to participate more in conversations about family and community land, most profits from land use continue to be controlled by local and international owners of capital. Further, companies are taking advantage of the liberalisation of the local economy to deny access to land and to dispossess women. Economic development is being prioritised over social justice and women's empowerment, inhibiting efforts to establish long-term gender justice and inclusive peace.

Neoliberal Reforms and Performative Gender Justice

Neoliberal reforms are endorsed as ways to 'emancipate women', but they are often only performative for international audiences. State actors and institutions have interests and motivations that can complicate the gender equality agenda. Laws and policies are influenced by the international community, and these pressures are prioritised over genuine efforts to help those who are most marginalised. Rather than creating opportunities for rural women, neoliberal reforms at times offer most benefits to state actors and policymakers themselves.

Recommendations

Government of Sierra Leone

- **Policy Reform and Implementation:** Legal and policy reform needs to be strengthened and must be implemented in ways that are inclusive of women. The laws and policies guaranteeing equal ownership and access to land for women must be fully implemented, which means providing equitable and adequate resources, training, personnel and oversight.

- **Land Policy and Inclusivity:** Review and update existing land policy to incorporate the progressive provisions outlined in the National Land Commission Act (2022) and the Customary Land Rights Act (2022). This should be accompanied by the development of a comprehensive land law. Women in local communities, not just educated and elite women, should be included in these processes.

- **Women's Rights and Corporate Interests:** Protect the rights of women when they conflict with corporate land interests. The current market-driven economic system, which is underpinned by capitalist values, does not empower women economically. The laws and policies relating to land rights must temper or balance corporate interests with gender justice. This includes closing legal loopholes that allow women's rights, including land rights, to be compromised in the name of development.

- **Civil Society and Local Organisations:** Support civil society and local organisations working on the ground. These organisations are working in communities, where structural issues reproduce disadvantages for women every day. They should be engaged, funded and better supported at a national and local level to continue this vital work.

Traditional Authorities

- **Customary Law and Gender Equality:** The institution of chieftaincy should be reformed. This should focus on equal representation and participation of women in chiefdom decision making, including in committees set up to manage land and land resources. As customary law is dynamic, those rules that discriminate against women should be changed to allow greater female participation in the rural economy and governance.

Civil Society

- **Land Justice and Non-State Actors:** Paralegal and dispute resolution assistance to women should be enhanced. Women must be fairly represented in land deals and have access to justice when their rights are violated. As changes to the formal state system take time to reach rural communities, they do not provide timely and appropriate justice in the short term. The capacity of non-state actors must be expanded to help women navigate existing systems of governance and justice. This includes supporting education and information sharing about new laws and policies that are beneficial to women, especially in poor rural communities.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/publications/country-briefing-sierra-leone/

3.6 **Sri Lanka**

This country brief draws on the following projects: Gender, Governance, and Peacebuilding: Institutional Reform in Jordan, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka; Culture and Conflict; Return, Reintegration and Political Restructuring; Gender and Forced Displacement; Narrating (in) security; When Women Do Not Own Land: Land Ownership and Women's Empowerment in Sri Lanka; Legacies of the Disappeared: Missing Children and Parental Harm in Protracted Social Conflict; The Potentialities and Politics of Transformation; Gender and Transitional Justice in Sri Lanka and Rights Research with Social Media.

Country Context

A Violent End to Civil War: The civil war, fought between the majority Sinhalese government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who sought an independent Tamil state, began in 1983 and ended in 2009. Almost three decades of violent conflict left a legacy of widespread human rights abuses, mass displacement and vast numbers of casualties on both sides. Despite various attempts to negotiate peace and short-lived ceasefires, the war was ultimately ended by military force, through which government forces took control of LTTE-held territories, defeating the LTTE. The war's end, however, did not heal the deep ethnic tensions at the core of the conflict, and the issues that remain continue to affect societal structures, hindering efforts towards reconciliation and reconstruction.

Peace and Progress? In the 15 years since the end of the war, Sri Lanka has taken steps towards reconciliation, but results have been mixed. Efforts to restore damaged infrastructure, revive the economy, and promote tourism have had some positive outcomes, but progress on the underlying issues of ethnic division, justice for war crimes and reconciliation has been slow. The government has faced criticism for its inadequate commitment to accountability and the reconciliation processes, especially regarding the justice system

and its handling of war-related crimes and human rights violations. The pursuit of transitional justice remains a contentious topic, and the country's approach to gender-based violence and violations of minority Tamil rights during the conflict are a particular concern.

Ongoing Security Challenges: Despite the formal end of the conflict, Sri Lanka still faces security challenges, including sporadic ethnic tensions and concerns regarding the risk of radicalisation. In 2014 and 2018, there were outbreaks of anti-Muslim riots, while the Easter Sunday bombings of 2019 highlighted vulnerabilities in national security and drew attention to the presence of Islamist extremist factions. There have also been periods of civil unrest and protest, which, though not typically violent, illustrate the social and economic instability that remains in Sri Lanka. In 2022, Sri Lanka experienced an economic crisis, leading to severe shortages of essential goods, soaring inflation and power cuts. This led to widespread protests demanding economic and political reform, which culminated in the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. In a society still healing from war, it has proven difficult to strike a balance between strengthening the national security apparatus while ensuring that measures do not exacerbate divisions or infringe on human rights.

The GJS Hub in Sri Lanka

Women and girls, especially those from the most conflict-affected regions, were disproportionately affected by the war in Sri Lanka. They continue to face challenges relating to economic insecurity, social stigma and limited access to justice for the many forms of violence they have endured. Though the empowerment of women and gender justice are understood as critical elements of post-war reconciliation in Sri Lanka, progress has been hampered by patriarchal norms, displacement, economic dependence and inadequate legal mechanisms.

In Sri Lanka, GJS Hub research focusses on gendered experiences of conflict and the reconstruction process, including the legacies of forced displacement and the ways in which social roles of women and men have been shaped by the prolonged conflict. The projects linked to Sri Lanka are diverse and interdisciplinary, employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Ethnography and interviews with returnees offer insights into the socio-economic factors influencing the reintegration process, while household surveys of internally displaced people provide a comparative lens on living conditions and gender-specific challenges pre- and post-displacement. Participatory arts-based methods facilitate discussions around gender norms and theatre and videography have been used to engage Tamil women in storytelling to process experiences of identity and trauma. Workshops and craft-making groups were used as mediums for dialogue and community building among women, focusing on the preservation of Indigenous knowledge and fostering economic independence. Finally, participant observation, ethnography, and discourse analysis investigate perspectives on the Office of Missing Persons and its role in the ongoing search for truth and justice in post-conflict Sri Lanka.

The Challenges

Lack of Truth and Justice for Enforced Disappearances: Family members of the disappeared have been demanding accountability for war related disappearances, including hundreds who disappeared after surrendering to the army. Despite the establishment of the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) to investigate disappearances, there has been little progress due to resistance to truth and justice from Sinhala Buddhist nationalist leaders and ideologues lack of cooperation from the armed forces and government bureaucracy, as well as lack of expertise and capacity.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): Many IDPs are still waiting to be resettled or relocated. During the war more than a million Sri Lankans belonging to the country's Northern and Eastern provinces were displaced from their homes. While the majority of those affected by the conflict have received aid to return or have been relocated or assimilated with their new communities, some IDPs are still waiting to be resettled or relocated 12 years after the end of the war.

Insufficient Prosecution of CRSV: Prosecution of conflict related sexual violence (CRSV) in Sri Lanka remains notoriously intractable, and there are a variety of practices, systemic shortfalls, gaps in the law and procedural blind spots that work against the successful prosecution of CRSV in Sri Lanka.

Instrumentalising Women's Rights Reforms: Political actors use women's participation in politics and the recent gender quota requirement to detract from human rights abuses in the country and to uphold ethno-racial and anti-feminist policies.

Restrictions on Women's Access to Land: Access to land and ownership of property can increase women's social status, income and empowerment. However, recent laws and practices in relation to land discriminate against women's inheritance, ownership and autonomous control.

Key Findings

Motivations for Return Migration

Return is driven by adverse conditions abroad, positive developments at home and a desire to contribute to progress in Sri Lanka. Younger and second-generation migrants want to reconnect with their roots and cultural identity. Through social media, diasporas and displaced people can maintain strong connections, which influence their return decisions. Returnees bring valuable expertise, particularly in health, education and IT, and act as agents of innovation.

Gendered Experiences of Return

Women face significant discrimination and challenges on return, including patriarchal norms, impacting their public and private roles. Despite facing gender-based discrimination, women returnees are instrumental in promoting gender equality and development within their communities.

No Investigation into Disappeared Persons

Families of the disappeared, overwhelmingly led by women, have formed collectives to demand truth and justice, including international oversight of the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) to ensure accountability. This demand has not been met, and families of the disappeared are now demanding a purely international mechanism.

Social and Economic Marginalisation of IDPs

IDPs have limited access to economic and livelihood opportunities, which caused displacement to become protracted and worsened living conditions. Land and housing grants are insufficient, and IDPs have been reluctant to accept what land has been proposed by the government because of its poor quality and fertility, and because it is located in areas with a lack of livelihood opportunities.

Compromised Health and Sanitation for Women and Girls

Displacement severely affects access to healthcare, clean water and sanitation, with pronounced impacts on women's reproductive health. The lack of basic necessities like sanitary products and clean water further marginalises displaced women and girls.

Lack of Justice for Sexual Violence

Gaps and shortcomings in the judicial system, from inadequate recording of CRSV complaints at police stations to gaps in medical examination and reporting, amount to a general systemic shortfall in access to justice for women. State denials of such crimes and the state exception lead to impunity, which strengthens cultural attitudes that stigmatise and silence the victim-survivor. The lack of witness protection, particularly in highly militarised contexts, also results in underreporting.

Key Findings continued

Political Marginalisation of Minority Ethnic Women

The women who are able to enter politics are associated with dominant political parties, while women from poor, rural, Tamil and Muslim communities remain politically marginalised. Post-war reforms that could further women's rights are limited and compromised when women's inclusion is used to reinforce existing forms of social oppression and subjugation.

Patriarchal Land Ownership Laws and Customs

Only 16% of all privately-owned land in Sri Lanka belongs to women, limiting their access to agricultural assets and benefits such as subsidies, credit, or irrigation water. The absence of a uniform law for land rights, the complexities in customary laws, the ethnoreligious and cultural norms that shape women's land ownership and the impact of war all affect women's land ownership and, by extension, their empowerment.

Valuing Traditional Knowledge

There is a pressing need to document and preserve Indigenous knowledge and culture, including craft making techniques, which are at risk due to generational changes and the political-economic crisis. Emphasising traditional crafts helps maintain cultural identity and contributes significantly to women's economic independence, which plays a crucial role in peacebuilding efforts.

Recommendations

Government of Sri Lanka

- **Justice for the Disappeared:** Prioritise disappearance cases and investigate what happened in these cases to restore faith in the OMP. Until these investigations are completed, provide interim compensation to family members.

- **Housing and Restitution for IDPs:** Increase the current land and housing grants to IDPs in line with inflation. Continue and expand work on documenting the experiences of IDPs to inform policies of protection and assistance in resettlement and relocation. Consider the sources of livelihood of IDPs when proposing alternative land.

- **Justice for Victim-Survivors of CRSV:** Include a legal definition of CRSV in the substantive law. Review legal standards on consent and corroboration in cases of CRSV and recognise the impact of trauma on witness statements. Adapt existing legislation, such as the Witness Protection Act, and best practices from elsewhere to guarantee the participatory rights of victims in court.

- **Existing Laws Need to be Further Amended and Properly Implemented to Allow Women to have Greater Access to, and Full Control of, Land:** The government administrators should ensure that the recent amendments to laws (i.e., Land Development Ordinance) are honoured in practice and that women are given more space for decision-making in matters of land utilisation. Women should be fully acknowledged and respected as 'heads of the household' and farmers where applicable.

- **Victim-Survivor Support in CRSV Case:** Institute mandatory and robust training of police officers and judicial medical officers in CRSV cases and trauma to ensure gender sensitivity and the protection of the dignity and rights of the victim-survivor. A police officer of the gender preferred by the victim-survivor should be present when the complaint is made, and a person of choice should be present at the medico-legal examination.

- **Encouraging Return Migration:** Develop and implement policies to attract and integrate highly skilled returnees, recognising their potential to contribute to economic development and peace. This includes establishing return policies and institutions that facilitate reintegration and capitalise on the diaspora's human, cultural and social capital.

- **Integrated Dialogue for Future Peace and Economic Stability:** Incorporate discussions on identity and culture into peace and economic dialogues. Arts-based practices and research offer unique insights that can guide policymaking. They present nuanced narratives of conflict and can contribute to policies promoting communal understanding and healing, which can in turn engender a unified national identity that transcends ethnic and cultural differences.

International Community:

- **Gender-Inclusive Policies:** There is a critical need for supporting the development, implementation and communication of gender-inclusive policies from the international to the local level. Enhancing training and awareness about gender analysis in forced displacement policies can significantly improve the conditions for displaced women and girls.

- **Centring Marginalised Women in Gender Policy:** Existing policies that are intended to better integrate women into systems of power need to be refocused so that they centre marginalised communities. In doing so, they must also address the systemic issues that subject marginalised women to harm and violence.

- **OMP Accountability:** It is imperative that international actors support the efforts of families of the disappeared and sustain pressure on the Sri Lankan state to be transparent regarding cases of missing persons and forcibly disappeared persons, particularly with regard to the OMP. Keeping Sri Lanka on the UN Human Rights Council's agenda and opening cases based on universal jurisdiction are vital for accountability. This may also require sanctions against individuals for obstructing justice.

- **International Engagement of Sri Lankan Diaspora:** Engage and mobilise experts within the diaspora, focusing on gender justice and inclusive peace. This involves developing strategies to effectively leverage the diaspora's resources, including knowledge, skills and economic contributions.

- **Supporting Participatory and Arts-Based Methods:** Recognise and financially support art-based research methodologies for their unique contributions to data collection, learning and dissemination. Funders should appreciate the process and the output equally, promoting innovative and impactful research approaches.

To learn more about Hub research in Sri Lanka visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/publications/country-briefing-sri-lanka/

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3.7 **Uganda**

This country brief draws on the following projects: Sex, Love and War; Cross-border Wars, Sexuality and Citizenship; Beyond War Compensation; and From Female Combatants to Filmmakers – Expanding Women's Agency in War and Peace.

Country Context

Decades of War and Conflict: Since gaining independence in 1962, Uganda has endured a string of authoritarian regimes, wars and internal conflicts. The conflict involving the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which began in 1986, was characterised by extreme brutality and violence, including against civilians. The roots of this conflict have been linked to deep-seated historical tensions, particularly relating to the Acholi people in Northern Uganda. The conflict resulted in the displacement of millions of people and significant humanitarian crises.

In 2006, peace talks began between the Ugandan government and the LRA, leading to a ceasefire, but the LRA did not completely disband. Instead, they relocated to neighbouring countries, where they continued to carry out sporadic attacks. The LRA no longer posed a significant threat in Uganda after 2006, and by the early 2020s, relative peace had been restored in many neighbouring countries, including Rwanda, though armed groups are still persistent in Somalia, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Uganda has attempted to restore peace and normalcy in the Great Lakes region, which has included frequent deployments of its army to the DRC, South Sudan, Rwanda and other states.

Internally, Uganda is left with many challenges in addressing the legacy of the conflict, including unresolved grievances, and the rehabilitation of former child soldiers, female ex-combatants and "war-women".

Peace and Progress? While the country has taken steps toward promoting women's rights and representation, especially in legislative bodies, deep-rooted gender disparities persist. Challenges, such as gender-based violence, limited access to education and healthcare for women and girls, and unequal economic opportunities remain pervasive. The government's commitment to gender equality has at times been reflected in various policies and initiatives, yet implementation and societal change are slow.

Uganda has also sought to address issues in both formal and customary legal systems, but the judiciary's capacity to handle issues relating to gender-based violence and women's rights is often hampered by resource constraints, corruption and a backlog of cases. Additionally, the interplay between formal legal processes and customary law poses unique challenges in delivering justice, especially in rural areas.

Ongoing Security Challenges: While the state's approach to security has been robust, there are concerns regarding human rights and the impact of security measures on vulnerable populations, including women and children. Northern Uganda, for example, has seen multiple Government programmes focused on reconstruction and compensation since the end of the conflict. These have been accompanied by accountability efforts at both international and domestic levels – including through the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Crimes Division (ICD) – to bring alleged perpetrators to justice. However, despite significant investment in post war recovery, myriad post-conflict conflicts continue to emerge and occur frequently in the whole Acholi sub-region.

The GJS Hub in Uganda

As Uganda navigates these complex issues, understanding the nuanced relationship between gender, justice and security is vital for effective policy formulation and implementation. Across the Gender, Justice and Security Hub, our projects seek to better understand the challenges that have emerged in the aftermath of conflict in Uganda. Collectively, they address the marginalisation of women and children impacted by the conflict and the effects of military deployments, including ongoing disputes in post-conflict Northern Uganda, and the unique experiences of female ex-combatants.

Diverse Methodologies

In Uganda, Hub research combines long-term ethnography, psychometric assessments, community theatre, oral narratives, and participatory art-based and innovative approaches, such as participatory filmmaking and "love life history" interviews. These varied methods are instrumental in understanding the intricacies of post-conflict settings, particularly gender dynamics, but they also serve as platforms for those affected to voice their experiences. For instance, exploring how intimate relationships have been affected by conflict can facilitate broader community dialogues on culturally sensitive subjects.

The Challenges

Social, Economic and Psychological Impacts of Military Deployments: Protracted, multiple deployments by the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) within and across national borders have had complex social, economic and psychological impacts on soldiers. It has also created a generation of so-called "war-women" – women with whom soldiers have intimate relationships during cross-border deployments – and street children, who then face institutional barriers and social stigma. By engaging with soldiers, their families, and the "war-women" we have gained insights into their health experiences and the evolution of their familial and social relations. This research is critical in developing gender-sensitive changes to military institutional frameworks and policy guidelines.

Experiences of Female Ex-Combatants: We are deeply engaged in documenting and understanding the roles and experiences of female ex-combatants. These women share their stories through peer-to-peer interviews and documentary filmmaking. Their narratives reflect on their involvement in armed movements and experiences during conflicts, but they also detail their journeys towards rebuilding their lives in a post-conflict environment.

Post-Conflict Conflicts: Post-war conflicts, which are often associated with land acquisition, continue to affect livelihoods, particularly for women. This is exacerbated by displacement, persistent hierarchical cultural norms and structural issues that limit women's agency in land rights claims. Through a combination of interviews, observations, group dialogues and participatory arts-based methods, this research helps to understand the gendered realities and experiences that emerge in post-war contexts.

Key Findings

Marginalisation and Stigmatisation

Female ex-combatants, "floating populations", and women returnees and their children – particularly those born in captivity or conflict zones – continue to face severe marginalisation, leading to stigmatisation, economic struggles, and social challenges, including issues with community integration and accessing opportunities.

Land Ownership and Inheritance Issues

The patrilineal land ownership system in Uganda creates significant challenges for all women, and particularly female ex-combatants and their children, leading to disputes over land rights and insecurity, which exacerbates their economic and social difficulties.

Health and Reintegration Challenges

Female ex-combatants face inadequate long-term health support and neglect in reintegration programmes, impacting their physical and mental well-being, ability to work, and successful reintegration into society.

Economic Motivations in Conflict

Financial incentives for nation states and individual soldiers in conflicts, such as prolonged deployments, result in complex social issues, including the formation of temporary families and subsequent socio-economic problems for these families.

Social and Relational Disruptions

Extended conflicts and displacements have significantly disrupted intimate relationships, kinship systems, and traditional practices, including partner selection and marriage, leading to societal shifts and challenges in maintaining cultural norms.

Intergenerational and Cultural Conflicts

There is a notable generational divide and erosion of community trust due to the commercialisation of land and shifting cultural norms, which exacerbates conflicts and alters traditional community ties and trust.

Policy Gaps in Post-Conflict Scenarios

Current policies inadequately address the needs of children born from rape, conflict relationships and those repatriated, leading to issues with citizenship, documentation and social inclusion.

Persistence of Hierarchical Norms and Cultural Practices

Despite the upheavals caused by conflict, certain hierarchical and cultural norms persist, influencing contemporary social structures and practices, including gender roles and community leadership.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Warfare

Victims and survivors of generalised violence, armed conflicts and prolonged displacements suffer severe post-traumatic stress and recurring physical, mental and psychosocial ailments manifested as a "mental insurgency", which is exemplified by the high levels of suicide in post-conflict contexts.

Recommendations

Government and Policymakers

- **Government Engagement and Support:** Engage continuously and offer robust support to marginalised communities and "floating populations", including women returnees and children born in conflict, to address issues of stigmatisation, violence and social integration.

- **Simplification of Legal Processes:** Streamline legal documentation processes for people lacking parental or birthplace information, enabling better access to government services and legal rights, particularly for children born in captivity.

- **Land Reform and Community Trust:** Address land conflicts and challenges from land commercialisation by reinforcing community trust, facilitating the adaptation of traditional land and kinship systems, and ensuring fair land access for all, especially women and children affected by conflict.

- **Military Strategy and Deployment Policies:** Redefine military strategies to emphasise peaceful conflict resolution and limit the duration and frequency of deployments to prevent the formation of temporary families and improve soldier wellbeing.

International Organisations and NGOs

- **Role of International Actors:** Actively work with a wide range of actors to combat stigmatisation and discrimination against people formerly associated with armed groups, focusing on the specific needs and contexts of the affected populations.

Communities and Cultural Institutions

- **Prioritise Post-War Social Identity:** Develop programmes to support social connectedness, encourage intergenerational dialogue, and foster collective identity within communities. This cultural heritage and sense of identity in the Acholi community is a core aspect of returning to social cohesion.

Media and Communication Sectors

- **Effective Community Outreach:** Make use of radio and other media as tools for community outreach and public debate, especially in rural, war-impacted areas, to bridge divides and to amplify marginalised voices across various demographic lines.

Healthcare and Social Services

- **Long-term Health and Reintegration Programmes:** Develop and implement comprehensive and intentional reintegration programmes that address the long-term physical, mental and social impacts of conflict on ex-combatants, ensuring their successful reintegration and improved quality of life.

To learn more about Hub research in Uganda visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/publications/country-briefing-uganda/
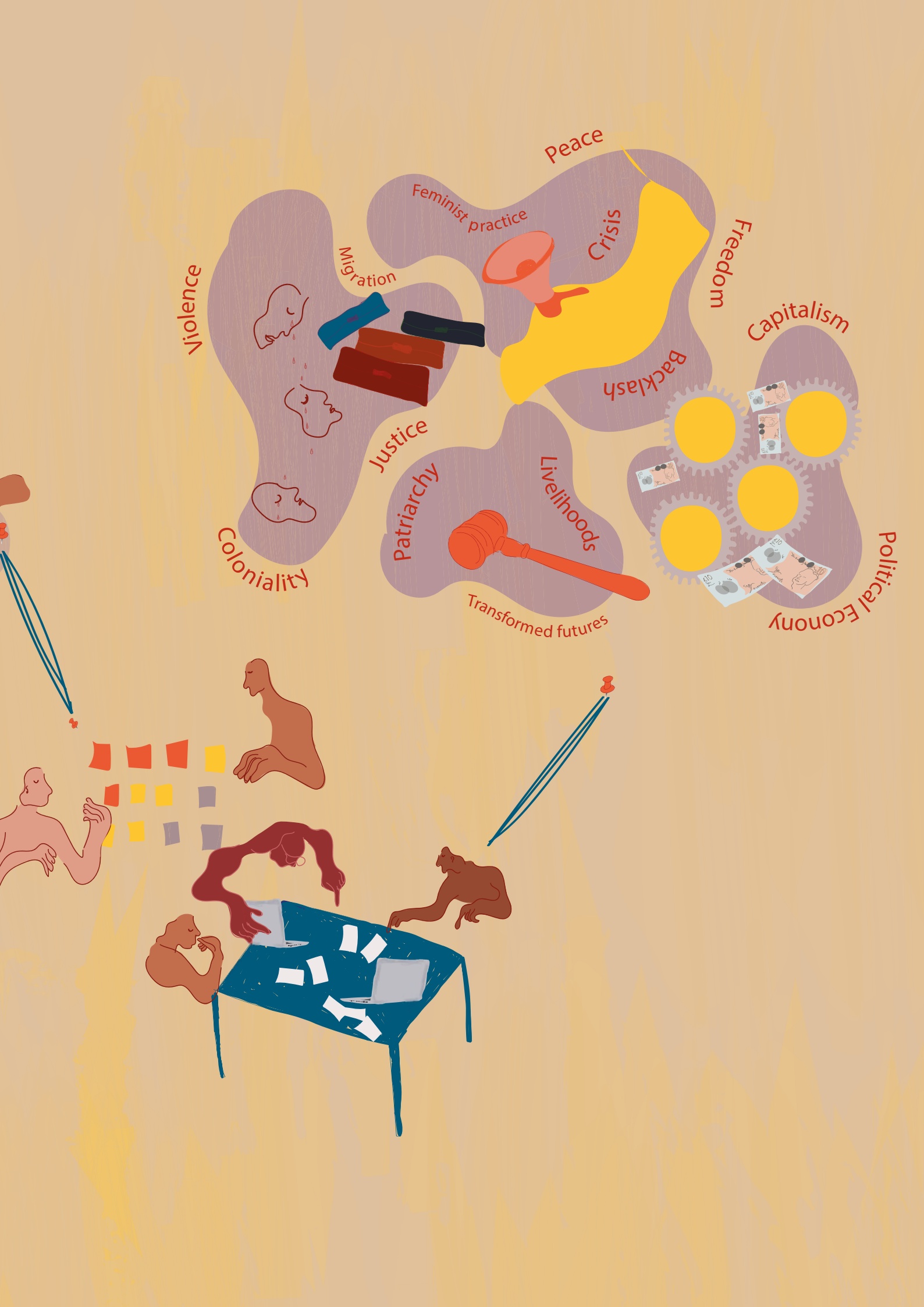
Transformation and Empowerment

This chapter examines the theme **Transformation and Empowerment** across the Hub's research. The chapter starts with a summary of the theme, followed by detailed findings and recommendations from each of the nine Hub research projects working in this area.

4.1 Transformation and Empowerment

Hub Co-Directors

Professor Angelika Rettberg, Universidad de los Andes

Professor Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Queen's University Belfast

The Transformation and Empowerment (T&E) stream is an integral part of the broader Hub aimed at advancing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality, SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The focus of T&E is on exploring the concepts of 'transformative justice' and 'empowerment' within conflict-affected societies, aiming to understand who is being empowered and how in these contexts, and the challenges faced by those seeking empowerment, both practically and institutionally, in multiple conflict and post-conflict societies. The work stream addresses key questions and challenges for achieving gender equality in post-conflict countries such as Sri Lanka, Iraq, Afghanistan, Colombia, Northern Ireland, Nepal, Uganda and Rwanda.

Post-conflict societies face a myriad of challenges, including institutional fragility, political polarisation, divided communities, the impact of war on women's rights, victim reparations, reconciliation, gender-based violence, new forms of violence, colonial legacies and the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms. The Hub's work underscores the layered, intersectional and multidimensional nature of these issues, which may vary across countries and cultures, yet share similar challenges.

Comparative analysis and recommendations from T&E projects highlight several Key Findings:

- **Insufficient Women's Rights Reforms and Lack of Institutional Transformation:** The projects reveal that legal/political reforms and institutional changes addressing women's rights have been insufficient, and this is especially salient when incorporating intersectional analyses. For instance, in Colombia, there have been failures to guarantee women's rights, but there have been significant variations in how this affects women of different ethnicities, which exposes overlooked structural inequalities.

- **Colonial Legacies in Transitional Justice:** The Hub emphasises the need for transitional justice mechanisms to address colonial legacies, recognising their long-term structural impact on women's and men's engagement in various aspects of society.

- **Political Unwillingness to Implement Transitional Justice Mechanisms Poses Significant Challenges:** These mechanisms, integral to addressing historical injustices and fostering reconciliation, often face resistance due to the polarised environment created by political forces. As a result, the rights and remedies of victims remain unfulfilled, highlighting a critical obstacle to the effective implementation of transitional justice.

- **Complexities of Reconciliation:** Projects studying reconciliation in post-conflict societies highlight its complex and multi-layered nature. Reconciliation efforts must consider factors such as age, gender and the type of victimisation experienced. Tailored measures aligned with diverse populations' expectations and needs are crucial.

- **Centrality of Women's Voices:** A common recommendation is to place women and their voices at the centre of transformations and interventions in post-war settings. Recognising women's agency and the importance of their participation in justice and security is essential, aligning with international agendas such as WPS and SDGs.

- **Use of Culture in Addressing Conflict Struggles:** The T&E stream emphasises the potential of using culture and related approaches to address post-conflict struggles. Cultural endeavours that generate sustainable livelihoods using women's tacit knowledge, from the safety of their homes is a key source of empowerment. Culturally relevant and locally valued practices enable reparations, healing and a sense of dignity to be maintained which in turn strengthen women's movements.

- **Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic:** Despite progress in research and practice, the COVID-19 pandemic represents a significant setback. It has shifted the trajectory for achieving gender equality, with national and international policies seemingly regressing rather than progressing. Recognition of this impact is crucial for future initiatives.

4.2 Addressing Post-Colonial Legacies in Transitional Justice

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Professor Bill Rolston, Ulster University

Dr Claire Wright, Ulster University

About the Project

Many states to which transitional justice mechanisms are applied are former colonies. But colonial occupation, decolonisation, and the ongoing legacy of colonialism frequently go unremarked in scholarly transitional justice debates and policymaking. In the vast literature on transitional justice, the issue of colonialism, with its different legacies and possible effects on both armed conflict and peace processes, has lightly been touched upon and rarely integrated into the substance of transitional justice. Likewise, practices of transitional justice seem to overlook the long-term impact of colonialism despite the importance of a historical perspective to identify and overcome entrenched barriers to a durable and meaningful peace.

In response to this lacuna, this project aims to see what – if any – role transitional justice can play in relation to colonial harms embedded in the contemporary societal structure. Looking at both Colombia and Northern Ireland, two countries with very different experiences of colonialism, the research focusses on the following three questions:

- When deciding to deal with 'the past', how far back should policymakers and legislators look?

- How does the colonial past shape conditions conducive to contemporary conflict?

- How should engaging this past shape contemporary conflict-ending solutions?

A core element of our work involves 20 interviews with academics based in Colombia, alongside interviews with Indigenous and Afro-descendant women in collaboration with the non-governmental organisation Corporacion Alianza Iniciativa Mujeres por la Paz-IMP.

Key Findings: Colombia

- **Links between colonialism and peace accords are rarely explored in research and practice.** Most academics interviewed do not see a clear link between colonialism and peace processes. Some social movements, particularly those led by Indigenous and Afro-descendant Colombians, identified the value of a colonial time frame, but this is not framed as a central concern by Colombian academics.

- **The Havana Peace Accord engages with, but does not sufficiently address, colonial legacies and their enduring impacts.** Colonial legacies cut across many aspects of the Colombian peace process, from Indigenous people's claims, to land restitution and its implementation, through to social responses to maintaining the peace agreement — specifically in conservative pushback against the peace accord. The project asserts that if colonial legacies are left unaddressed, these important issues undermine the peace process and the prospect of enduring peace.

- **The ongoing Black Lives Matter movement has resulted in discourse shifts in Colombia over the issues of colonialism.** This research commenced just before the Black Lives Matter protests, which renewed global concerns about the human rights of Afro-descendent peoples. Discourses around colonial legacy, slavery, and discrimination rightly remain persistent in the public sphere since then. As a result, transitional justice institutions emerging in this context are beginning to incorporate these perspectives and issues into their work more frequently.

- **Decolonisation can be too big of a process for transitional justice to fully and holistically address.** Interviews with Afro-descendant women leaders throughout Colombia supported by literature in this area explores how the scale and scope of decolonisation can be overwhelming for transitional justice to address. Colonial legacies are entwined with cultural legacies and filter into value systems, education and deeply rooted discrimination. There must be a "decolonising of the mind", a process of individuation that goes beyond traditional understandings of a transitional justice process.

- **Education reform is essential to decolonisation efforts.** Educational content and reform are a key site for the implementation of decolonisation efforts. Many interviewees note that the primary route for Indigenous,

> **"**
> You have to take a long-term approach to peacebuilding to really unpack the kind of the details of past grievances and dispossession of land, territory, culture, language... how do you build peace if you don't look at these historical grievances and structural injustices?**"**
>
> DR CLAIRE WRIGHT

Afro-descendant, and Black women to tackle multiple obstacles in their way is via education, as well as the power of intercultural education in decolonisation.

- **The Colombia Truth Commission has addressed colonial legacies.** The Truth Commission takes on a broad outlook and is immersed in the global denouncement of colonial power, with many references to colonialism in its final multi-volume report. The section in the report on Indigenous peoples specifically expands the scope of the work beyond the past 50-year period of the Havana Peace Accord by stating "we're going to talk about a 500-year period".

- **Language and the framing of colonialism varies across contexts.** Colonialism as a term is understood differently in different communities. For example, some Indigenous women and communities reject the term as one invented by external communities to talk about what was happening to Indigenous peoples. For the Afro-descendant communities, colonialism is an important term that marks the beginning of their experience of slavery and exposure to violence. In this sense, grappling with and understanding the nuances in terminology use is key to de-colonial work.

Key Findings: Northern Ireland

- **Much can be learnt from Colombia when looking at the potential to decolonise Northern Ireland.** While each context is distinct and requires a careful context-specific analysis, placing the Irish and Colombian contexts into dialogue with one another reveals important insights about how the decolonisation of Northern Ireland might progress in light of the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent political agreements and the possibilities of a border poll.

Recommendations: Colombia

Government, Transitional Justice Institutions and The Truth Commission

- **Peacebuilding processes must engage with and analyse the continued impact of colonialism.** Addressing the impacts of colonialism should be embedded in the structures of peacebuilding institutions and transitional justice mechanisms as the conflict is not separate from these impacts.

- **Engagement with the continued impacts of colonialism will differ by context but must be done holistically and with impacted communities.** The impacts of colonialism look different in different contexts, it is therefore important to include, for example, Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples in discussions and decision making, to not only prevent any continuation of colonial discrimination, but to ensure that engagement and policies are community driven and speak to specific contexts.

- **Inter-cultural education is essential to addressing colonial legacies.** Colonialism and its impacts should be brought centrally into school curriculums, not just from a historical perspective, but from a critical and intercultural

> **"**
> The Colombian Truth Commission is very much swimming in the waters of decolonial theory. And so, the Indigenous People, the Ethnic People's chapter is approached with a decolonial methodology. **"**
>
> DR CLAIRE WRIGHT

perspective. These programmes should be both developed for and accessible to all.

- **Decolonial transitional justice work must not just talk about decolonisation, it must be methodologically decolonial in its creation as well.** Transitional justice frameworks should take a decentralised approach and take into account the practical implications of this in relation to time, funding, and language skills. A good example here is the Colombian Truth Commission and the ethnic peoples' volume where there was a prior consultation on methodology, which is a key right for Indigenous peoples.
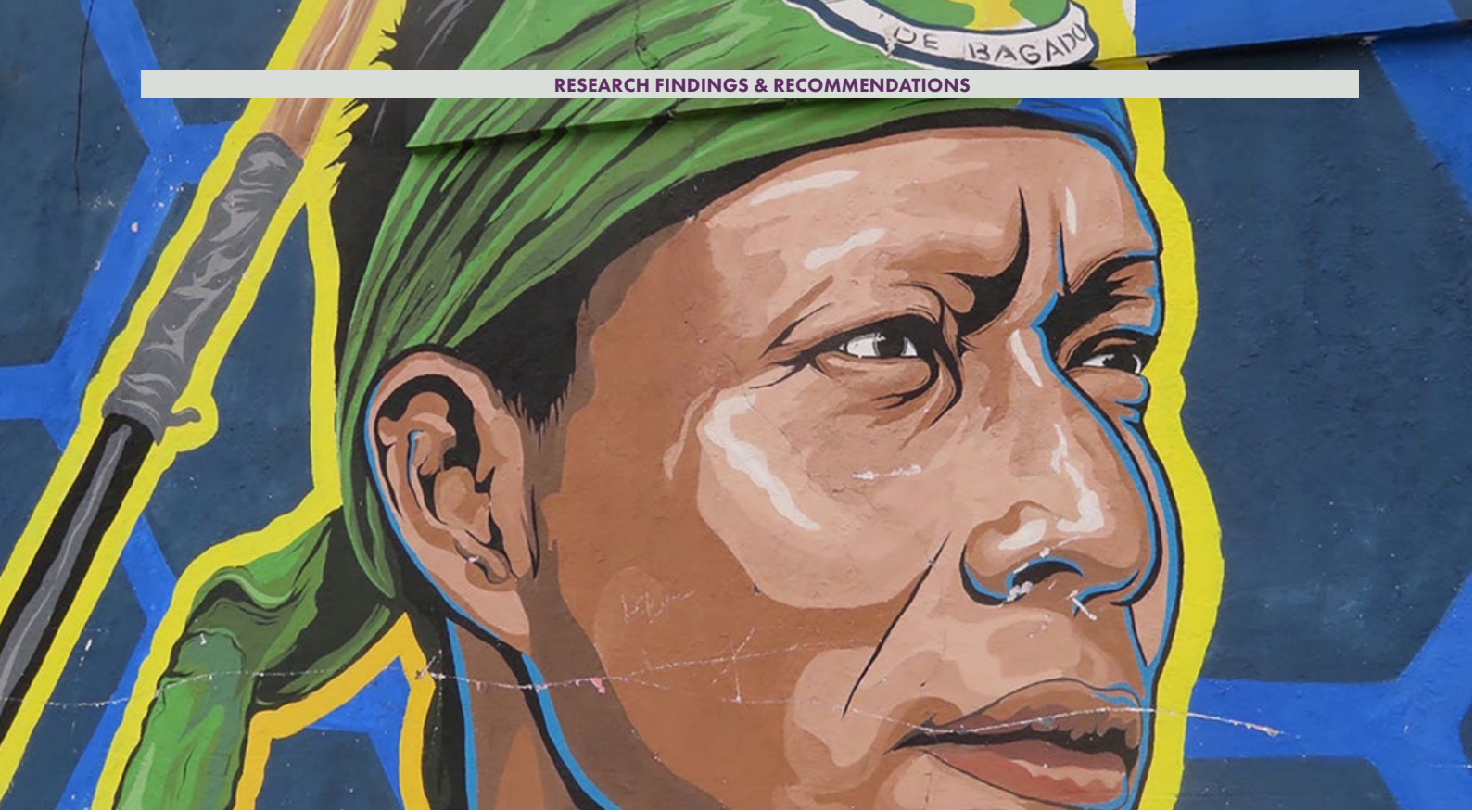
Recommendations: Northern Ireland

Key Actors in the Peace Process (Governments, Policymakers and Civil Society Leaders)

- **Peace processes must be flexible enough to deal with things that get left out in the peace agreement framework with an understanding that peace is slow and evolving.** Peace processes should be flexible and contain mechanisms built in to review and return to issues that may have been overlooked or excluded. Addressing colonial legacies is a key example here. To do this it also requires the recognition that peace is slow, as has been the case in Northern Ireland, and that the process is one of continued changes and evolution.

- **Peace processes must find ways to include groups who have been historically left out.** Communities who are part of the conversation can change over time, and finding ways to include them is significant for the durability of peace. In the context of Northern Ireland this means for example the inclusion of traveller communities, and different language communities that were not central to the peace discussion at the time.

> **"** Northern Ireland is a really good example of the point that peace is really slow. It's not a one and done. It's never a one and done. **"**
>
> PROFESSOR FIONNUALA NÍ AOLÁIN

- **Peace processes must prepare for meaningful changes in the transition to peace over time.** As the steps towards peace are taken, peace processes and policymakers around this must anticipate future transitions and be fluid in their approach to these. For example, the contemporary conversation about reunification between the north and south of Ireland, which is prefigured by the peace treaty and the peace agreement.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/addressing-post-colonial-legacies-in-transitional-justice/

Hub Voices

Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Rory O'Connell and Bill Rolston

Northern Ireland, Militarism and Disarmament

The history of Northern Ireland (or the North of Ireland) demonstrates the complicated phenomenon of violence and militarism in different forms and the complexity of moving beyond it in a society still navigating its post-conflict transition.

The Northern Irish state (and in that sense the modern United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) was itself the product of violence and threats of violence over the period 1913-1922. Unionists opposed to any home rule for the island of Ireland formed an Ulster Volunteer Force to resist Home Rule and imported large quantities of arms (and notably the security forces did not intervene in what became known as the Curragh Mutiny/Incident). In response, Irish nationalists seeking Irish self-determination created the Irish Volunteers and imported arms to support their efforts (an effort met with force). These actions emerged in a context of the ongoing activities by a strain of Irish nationalism which had periodically resisted English and British colonial rule in Ireland by force and rebellion. Such resistance was also met with different State strategies including repression, the imposition of martial law, and the periodic suspension of habeas corpus by the Crown.

Unsurprisingly then Northern Ireland was born amidst the violence of the Anglo-Irish War of the 1920's (Irish War of Independence, Black and Tan war). Even after a Truce and the partition of Ireland, the threats of non-state (Irish Republican Army/IRA) violence remained real and Northern Ireland experienced regular outbursts of communal and sectarian violence. The Northern Irish state adopted a distinctive security-orientation in this context. The police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, was armed (this was not the norm for uniformed police forces in Britain or Ireland), and supplemented with an exclusively Protestant paramilitary force, the B Specials. Northern Ireland adopted repressive legislation in the form of the Special Powers Act which gave the Minister of Home Affairs wide powers of arrest and internment without trial, curtailment of inquests, seizure of property, etc. Structural violence was also part of the administrative and civil legal systems with discrimination in employment, housing and elections against the Catholic and nationalist minority.

The totality of coercion and repression was famously labelled a 'factory of grievances' and large-scale conflict re-emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the wake of the repression of peaceful civil rights marches, widespread civil disorder broke out. The RUC and B Specials were unable to contain the violence (indeed security force violence contributed to the escalation of the conflict), and the British Army was brought onto the streets of Northern Ireland by the UK government. Non-state military forces, both nationalist/republican and unionist/loyalist, sought to arm or re-arm, and developed techniques of killing; the republicans had car bombs and booby-trap devices while the loyalist modus operandi was more frequently assassination. The British state adopted a range of responses to contain the situation, including important reforms in relation to employment, elections and housing. But reform was accompanied by repression; the security forces also adopted a highly militaristic responses which arguably made the conflict worse, not least the policy of collusion in particular with loyalist paramilitaries. Violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law (though it is disputed if the latter applied) were committed by all parties to the conflict. Republican groups at one point practised forced disappearances while loyalist groups engaged in the sectarian targeting of civilians. State sanctioned interrogation techniques during internment in the 1970s were deemed to amount to inhuman and degrading treatment by the European Court of Human Rights. The 1970s and 1980s saw increased efforts by non-state forces to secure arms overseas. These resulted in major deliveries of weapons and explosives to the IRA from the outcast Libyan regime and the loyalist acquisition, under the eyes of British intelligence, of weapons from South Africa.

The 1990s witnessed a multifaceted peace process which resulted in prolonged and ultimately permanent ceasefires by non-state actors from 1994 onwards and the adoption of the Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement 1998. The Agreement signalled a major effort to address the underlying conditions of the conflict. The efforts included the normalisation of state security efforts and the decommissioning of weapons held by non-state groups. Normalisation entailed the reduction in the role of the armed forces and the removal of security installations as well as removal of emergency legal powers (though many of these were translated in the regular law as permanent emergency powers). Military decommissioning was overseen by an Independent International Commissioning on Decommissioning. The exact undertakings of the key military stakeholders in relation to decommissioning was subject to significant 'constructive ambiguity'; while the parties to the Agreement agreed to use their influence to work towards decommissioning, the non-state armed groups were not formally parties to the Agreement. Disputes about decommissioning lead to an early break down in the Agreement institutions. Ultimately, the decommissioning issues were resolved, and while the military ceasefires have largely held, non-state armed groups remain involved in intimidation, internal violence, criminality and attacks on the security forces. An Independent Reporting Commission was created in 2015 to monitor the progress in tackling paramilitarism.

While much has been done to tackle different aspects of direct violence and militarism, tensions and difficulties remain, testament to the long hold of patterns of violence in society and the stop and start nature of peace processes. We note that tackling issues around gender and masculinities, domestic and intimate partner violence and structural violence remain difficult and also deeply entrenched.

The conflict has been highly gendered with men often playing the dominant role in political parties but also among non-state paramilitary forces. This does not mean we subscribe to any essentialism about the role of women, and there were notable examples of women in political leadership and in military activity in non-state armed groups, but these phenomena remained overwhelmingly male-dominated. Regrettably, the post-Agreement institutions have not delivered on commitments in the peace Agreement to ensure the equal participation of women in public life.   In parallel, there remain ongoing concerns about the organisation and "pull" of non-state forces and their ability to recruit young men, underscoring the allure of militarism and hegemonic masculinities in post-conflict socieites. While the peace process is generally internationally lauded for its inclusion of women in the peace negotiations, the challenges and discrimination such women faced during the process have been well-documented and speak to the practical difficulties of implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1375, even in the 'best-case' situations. In fact, the unwillingness of the UK government to accept Northern Ireland as a post-conflict society for the purposes of UNSCR 1375, and only marginal recent references to the role of women peacebuilders in the jurisdiction in the 5th National Action Plan, undercores the challenges of meaningful inclusion for women. Women's participation in public life has improved significantly over the almost thirty years since the peace agreement was signed but discrimination and violence against women remain structural challenges in families, communities and society. Much is still needed to address issues of sexual and gender-based violence, including intimate and domestic violence. There has been a sustained reluctance to discuss sexual and gender-based violence as an aspect of the conflict, while feminists have long affirmed that women in Northern Ireland were living in an 'armed patriarchy'.

There remain serious concerns about structural violence in the form of unequal and unfair access to basic social and economic rights. While there have been huge improvements since the early 1970s, there remain many deprived regions in Northern Ireland and serious inequalities as well as ongoing problems around housing and educational segregation. Positively, the peace Agreement contained provisions which sought to address a wide range of equality and human rights issues but some of these commitments have been inadequately realised or not realised at all. The bottom line, there remains a long road for Northern Ireland to travel to realize a fully demilitarized, equal and inclusive society.

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4.3 Culture and Conflict

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Photo credit: Culture and Conflict Project

About the Project

Working across four countries, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, this research investigates the value of culture to women in conflict settings, seeking to understand gendered economic exclusion and its relationship to peacebuilding, economic agency and empowerment. It uses a cultural mapping methodology to explore how communities of women across different conflict contexts rely on coded and tacit knowledge to rebuild their lives and to understand how cultural practices continue to exist and resist in these challenging contexts.

The project uses culturally relevant, socially significant practices of making as an entry point into discussions about the conflict, its impact, and its legacy. It then transforms these into an action-oriented strategy that pivots practices of making towards economic development and employment focussed narratives linked to concepts of gender equity, employment, agency, and work within the informal sector. Collectively these approaches inform us of the critical link between gendered knowledge, peacebuilding, and economic development through sustainable livelihoods.

Practices of Making Digital Exhibition
https://www.practicesofmaking.com/about.php

Project Approach

Led by Dr Neelam Raina, this project uses a participatory action approach, based on the commitment that those most impacted by research should lead in framing questions and determining which actions will be useful in effecting positive change. 103 women are involved in the project, across 8 research sites in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Through photography, colour theory training, pattern making, and various other craft making training sessions, the women expand and develop valuable cultural and economic skills. During the process of working together to produce crafts, the women engage in dialogue about issues of identity from national to micro identities and how intersectionality influences the everyday. They speak about their culture, peace and conflict in their contexts, some spontaneous singing, myth and legend story exchange, and notions of love and romance are part of these dialogues whilst the women work on their textiles. Tougher discussions about community relationships, discrimination and biases faced in the everyday are also documented.

The crafts produced by the women through this project have been shared widely in featured exhibitions and through ongoing sales of their art and crafts in markets across the UK. Thus, the last aspect of the project pivots into commercialising research, which benefits those who designed it. Sales in New York, London and Oxford have generated over £10,000 of profit which was distributed across the makers.

Key Findings

- **Informal sector work, and the value of gendered tacit knowledge in contributing to economic empowerment is overlooked.** Women in conflict and fragile contexts, rely on uncoded tacit knowledge to generate solutions for their financial survival. These are often dismissed as tertiary work and their value to peacebuilding and community cohesion is overlooked by policymakers. These are especially useful in nations like Afghanistan, where employment for women is banned, yet the homebased economy is a viable option for sustainable income generation.

- **Co-designed and co-produced policies and programming for economic development lead to more impactful and long-term engagement.** Co-written and programmed interventions from women are more inclusive and perceived as more meaningful by women. This project's work I think indicates a better uptake, deeper engagement, and cascading of training occurs only when the programme is designed collaboratively and in a bespoke manner that does not use a 'one size fits all' approach.

> **"**
> Identity becomes more refined and more written in stone when a conflict takes place, because it is all you have to hold on to. **"**
>
> DR NEELAM RAINA

- **Art based practices as a method are valuable for community level change in highly fragile contexts.** By focusing on personal experiences and shared cultural connections, craft-making can help facilitate challenging conversations about identity, peace, and conflict in accessible, equitable and open-minded ways that encourages collective sharing, listening and learning.

- **Creative practices face negative gendered biases.** Even in contexts where policymakers focus on women's economic empowerment, there is still pushback against craft making and art-based practices. These creative industries are often framed as hobbies rather than a source of culture and livelihood. This is a general pattern where any (perceived) non-economic benefit facing labour is relegated as a hobby. The women craft makers are then excluded from engagement with that policy space because they are not seen as artists but as hobbyists.

- **Women rely on women in a feminist practice of making.** Often the women will gather in a house, drink tea, chat and make objects collectively. These are feminist practices where the relationship between the women, the landscape, each other, and the practice of making is the basis of their group community identity.

- **Intergenerational knowledge is highly valued as women pass on their skills and train others.** Women in this research project value the intergenerational knowledge necessary for culturally rooted craft making. This knowledge, passed particularly along matrilineal lines, is central to both the cultural productions of material goods and the active and affective construction of identities within these conflict-affected contexts.

- **Safeguarding principles of care and ethics of research in conflict contexts is key to creating effective projects.** Understanding the context in terms of fragility, both physical and socio-political, is a necessary part of embedding the project with participant buy in. Awareness of local issues – such as inclement weather, access to public transport

and other such nuances of the research site – allow for ethics of operating to be clearly defined with care as a key component. Seeing researchers as partners and not data collectors is most important.

- **Agility of research methodology and partnerships to respond to polycrisis.** Each of the project's locations face multiple crises in addition to the global health pandemic of COVID-19. In Pakistan, widespread floods; in Sri Lanka economic and political crisis; in India the abolition of Article 370 removing Jammu and Kashmir's semi-autonomy; and in Afghanistan the departure of NATO and the collapse of Kabul to the Taliban. Each event triggered key methodological recalibration and response that did not place additional burden on partners, and instead relied on collaborative leadership of research teams in-country. Here the principles of equitable research where partners provided leadership in their response is key.

- **Empathy networks across the regions provide encouragement through solidarity.** Very often, the most marginalised lack networks of support and access to information outside of their local/national context, and they occupy a disconnected isolated space both geographically and conceptually. This work connects women in fragile remote contexts to others across their nation and in the wider region. Recognition of challenges that were unique to them, yet present in varying forms in the lives of others, provides reassurance and better engagement across contexts. Peer learning evolves with horizontal linkages between women's focus groups across South Asia.

- **Women face challenges such as marginalisation, minoritisation and exclusion through the prevalence of strong patriarchal structures.** Early marriage, limited access to finances, obedience in behaviour and action in accordance with male expectations, and constructs of community ethics and morals amongst other gendered

> "
> Resilience of culture that is so deeply embedded within the identity and their pride is unshakable. You cannot break it irrespective of the presence of the Taliban, or the Russians or the Americans. "
>
> DR NEELAM RAINA

Photo credit: Culture and Conflict Project

behaviour patterns, which influence decision making and related agency, are noted across the research contexts. Intersectional micro identities including gender and religion, identity of age, geographic location, dress and culture, language spoken, marital status, reproductive health, all contribute to understanding the impact of these patriarchal norms, expectations, and structures on women.

- **There is a preference across the intersectional groups for home based economic work.** Gendered roles of care and domestic responsibilities are evident in each group. Economic empowerment through livelihoods seems to be the only route that allows women to negotiate their space and decisions within the family setting. Home based economies through informal employment routes, that enable working from home and its safety, are acceptable to the families of the women. All the project's focus groups bar one consists of women who are related to each other – old aunts and young nieces, young cousins, relatives from the local area. Women travel for training and related work together, ensuring safety and trust through the physically company of a relative.

- **Early career researchers who are community based and engaged within youth groups have a strong desire to break away from micro identities and wish to be seen as change makers.** This is a space between practice and research. This holds true for each partner who is responsible for each aspect of research – inception of the project, selection and identification of case sites, focus group members, building of trust, collection and analysis of data, support for training, cascading of

training, leadership for surveys, engagement and support for retail, commercialisation logistics, disbursal of funds to makers, and reporting. These individuals are key in providing localised insights into the work of the project and its impact on stakeholders and leading on the policy impact and engagement dimension of this research in local settings.

- **The value of local languages in communication inwards (i.e., within the project), is not always reflected when communicating outwards from the project, indicating that while there is diversity, there is also inequality based on colonial structures.** Early career researchers, for example, use local languages to communicate. However, this changes to English when communicating progress, outputs, and results and when they desire to publish. This places English as a more valued language for communicating knowledge and impact, which highlights the need to decolonise research.

- **Public interest and support for research commercialisation where communities of women are supported is high.** Feedback from three retail events indicates that over 93% of those who engaged in our public events strongly support research that supports women, and research that produces tangible impact.

- **Economic development is seen as a key pathway for peacebuilding by policymakers.** In all four nations, interest on the part of the policymakers during and after training is evidenced. Some of this can now be noted through follow-on funding that some of the partners have already received. Afghanistan is the exception: there is no engagement with Afghan policymakers in Kabul. All project trainings, exhibitions, and sales have policy engagement with country Ambassadors, Ministers and INGOs.

- **Local policymakers have shown interest, yet collaborations and knowledge exchange have limited value and possibilities in South Asia, where policymaking remains within the pyramid of power structures.** Policy engagement is viewed as the end stage of research activity, distancing research outputs from policy inputs. This is a traditional way of viewing research and remains the acceptable way of doing so in South Asia. Policy engagement within research methods and design would be of more value in many ways

Photo credit: Culture and Conflict Project

> "
> Culture provides an entry point into a conversation that is hard to have when politics is the entry point. People can talk about politics in an affable, open-minded way and have fair arguments around it when you enter through culture and identity. "
>
> DR NEELAM RAINA

Recommendations

UN Agencies and Those Working on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

- **Reframe and broaden what 'economic empowerment' is and what it can look like in the context of WPS.** While the WPS agenda acknowledges the importance of economic empowerment, agency and sustainability it fails to adequately emphasise how such work can, and often does, emerge organically and informally from the bottom up in conflict-affected contexts by the women themselves. Economic livelihood does not just mean formal employment in jobs that require qualifications. It also means the vast and varied informal sector and home-based economies, which are often rooted in cultural practices and craft making.

- **Develop a 5th WPS pillar that focuses on women's economic development and sustainable livelihoods.** While historically addressed in the Relief and Recovery pillar of the WPS agenda, further attention and resources are needed to focus on women's economic development and sustainable livelihoods in ways that are led by women and for women.

- **Policy and programming need to be locally built and engaged in needs-based approaches that are codesigned.** Women's engagement in programmes designed for economic empowerment should include them in the design and delivery of such funds. Inclusion within such programmes, which are long-term and sustained, is key for deeper and meaningful uptake.

- **Intersectional understanding of gender is key to future success of policy and programming.** Each micro identity – location, ethnicity, language, accent, age, colour of skin, dress and body language amongst other such fragments of what makes each person – are key to successful policy. Each aspect influences the capacity, capability, access and inequalities that women and other genders experience in the everyday.

> " Culture has brought together communities that had been fractured. Future conversations or dialogue on the future of peace and politics and economics need be embedded within conversations about identity and culture. "
>
> DR NEELAM RAINA

- **Patriarchal structures and their absolute control over each aspect of women's lives must not be underestimated.** Micro aggressions, emphasis of power structures and hierarchies, moral standards and expectations of compliance, silence and passive acceptance, and diminishing and dismissive behaviours are all part of the spectrum of inequalities women face in South Asia. These should be accounted for and considered when developing any policy and programming.

- **Knowledge hierarchies and colonial hangovers should be carefully considered.** Knowledge and resources are carefully guarded, protected and hidden by mainly male actors, which produces hierarchies that underpin inequalities. Any policy that enhances these structural systems of control exacerbates inequalities for generations of women.

Photo credit: Culture and Conflict Project

Researchers

- **Explore innovative ways of engaging in research commercialisation projects that tangibly improve the livelihoods of participants while also advancing knowledge and practice.** Theoretically constructed projects provide data and insights of value only to the lead researcher and their publication-based outputs. Projects that bring material or tangible benefits to partners and participants, which are sustainably designed, and equitably led/co-produced should be viewed as a key method of conducting research, building decolonial approaches of non-extractive research.

- **Methodology of research needs to be adaptive and accommodating of lived realities and challenges that population groups face.** Micro identity based systemic inequalities should be explored within each aspect of research. Methodology that is co-designed with research teams should be adaptive to crises, which can only be achieved through shared leadership of research methodology. Training of researchers in methods that are relevant can be achieved through collective participatory action-based research.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:

For country specific findings and recommendations, please see linked publications below:

Afghanistan India Pakistan Sri Lanka

https://thegenderhub.com/
stories/culture-and-conflict-2/

PROJECT PROFILE

4.4 Gender, Governance and Peacebuilding: Institutional Reform in Jordan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka

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About the Project

This project focusses on the development of gender-related governance arrangements in conflict affected countries. The governance issues vary across the three countries studied, reflecting the importance of context. Jordan, while not in a state of civil war, has weathered the spill-over effects of conflicts in its region. The research focusses on the role of migrant women in forming networks to address issues such as violent extremism and participating in the formulation of Jordan's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

In the Philippines, the focus is on how the governance arrangements specified in the peace agreement, which ended decades of civil war in the country's only Muslim-majority region, affect women's political participation, and gender equality in the region.

In Sri Lanka, where the civil war ended not through a peace agreement but through military victory by government forces, the research focusses on the mechanisms to govern post-conflict accountability, particularly the Office of Missing Persons, and experiences of conflict-affected women seeking the truth about relatives. In all three cases, opportunities presented by new mechanisms for women's inclusion or peacebuilding are tempered by context-specific patriarchal and ethnic biases.

Sri Lanka

In 2018, The United Front for Good Governance in Sri Lanka established an Office on Missing Persons (OMP) as part of its commitment to furthering truth, justice and reconciliation in post-war Sri Lanka. In establishing the OMP, the Front was responding to a struggle for truth and justice that had been waged by minority Tamil relatives of the disappeared, the vast majority of them women, since the end of the civil war between the Sri Lankan state and The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in May 2009. In doing so, it also challenged the denial of disappearances by the previous regime, which had defeated the LTTE and ended the war.

Participant observation, ethnography, and discourse analysis are used to explore the response to the OMP from both Sinhala Buddhist nationalist leaders and family members of the disappeared, and why the OMP was rejected by both.

Jordan

In the wake of persistent regional conflicts and the resultant security challenges stemming largely from instability in Iraq and Syria, the Jordanian National Action Plans (JONAP) for 2018-2021 and 2022-2025 have been the key mechanisms for implementing UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. Implementation has focussed on training initiatives and community-based projects aimed at empowering women in conflict resolution and prevention of violent extremism. But a significant gap remains in recognising and supporting the informal contributions of migrant women, including Syrian refugees. This project examines the contributions of Jordanian and Syrian women to local peace and security mechanisms.

This case study uses desk research, six focus group discussions in three Jordanian communities (Mafraq (North), Al Baqa'a (Central), and Ma'an (South), and 12 key informant interviews with representatives from civil society organisations (CSOs), international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), and key stakeholders.

> **"**
> The OMP has failed to fulfil its mandate under the law. It now exists to appease and distract the international community. Moreover, it is weaponised against relatives of the disappeared. **"**
>
> DR CHULANI KODIKARA

The Philippines

In 2012, the Philippine government signed a peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which along with other revolutionary groups had waged a civil war since the early 1970s to demand a separate state. The agreement created a new regional government with special institutional features that recognise the Bangsamoro people's right to self-determination within the context of the Philippine constitution. The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) came into being in 2019 and has since then enacted regional laws on the conduct of elections, local government systems, the structure of the civil service, and so forth. Given that gender provisions in many peace agreements are often poorly implemented in practice, this case study examines the challenges and opportunities facing gender-equality advocates in realising the potential of the Bangsamoro peace deal.

In addition to attending events (public consultations, sittings of the regional parliament, stakeholder workshops on aspects of the peace process), the project team has collected data and conducted interviews with party leaders, civil society representatives, members of the Bangsamoro Parliament, former combatants, donor agencies, government officials at the provincial, regional, and national levels, and members of the national legislature.

Key Findings: Sri Lanka

- **The international toolkit of transitional justice can be instrumentalised by bad faith governments to manage international pressure while delivering neither truth nor justice.** The OMP has failed to fulfil its mandate under the law. It now exists to appease and distract the international community. Moreover, it is weaponised against relatives of the disappeared.

- **Truth-seeking is not easier than justice in deeply divided contexts.** In post-war Sri Lanka, truth seeking is wrongly assumed to be easier than judicial prosecutions. Indeed, truth is not just a second-best option to justice but an equally radical demand.

- **Family members of the disappeared in Sri Lanka are demanding an international truth and justice mechanism.** The failure of the domestic truth-seeking mechanism is driving family members, most of whom are women, to demand an international mechanism, primarily through the UN Human Rights Council.

Key Findings: Jordan

- **Women contribute to Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) and conflict resolution through their contributions as caregivers, educators, activists, and political leaders.** As caregivers and educators, they shape values and foster tolerance, lessening susceptibility of youth to radical influences. They are well positioned to detect early signs of radicalisation. The evidence of their impact is further seen in their activism and leadership roles, where their informal women's networks and engagements with local leaders can help raise awareness about extremism.

- **Despite Jordanian and Syrian refugee women's contributions to preventing violent extremism (PVE), they face substantial obstacles.** Societal norms, rooted in the belief that women's primary role is in the home, restrict their participation in public decision-making. This also limits their access to leadership positions crucial for peacebuilding efforts. Violence against women directly undermines their ability to contribute effectively to the creation of peaceful and inclusive societies. Political factors, including restrictive laws, further diminish the effectiveness of women's roles in conflict resolution and social cohesion.

> **"**
> Societal norms, rooted in the belief that women's primary role is in the home, restrict their participation in public decision-making and their access to leadership positions crucial for peacebuilding efforts. **"**
>
> MAI E'LEMAT

- **Civil society organisations (CSOs) play a major role in aiding women within local communities to mitigate the spread of violent extremism.** The research identifies several key CSOs including Arab Women's Organization, Women's Program Centres, Jordanian National Commission for Women, Peacegeeks, WANA, Generation for Peace, and Institute of Politics and Society, all of which have mobilised women against extremism. However, women report that some communities exhibit resistance to PVE measures due to cultural perceptions and security apprehensions.

- **Despite the Jordanian National Commission for Women's participatory approach in crafting the first Jordanian National Action Plan (JONAP) 2018-2021, improvements are needed in including marginalised women.** Problems of inclusion affect Syrian refugee women in particular. Despite this challenge, significant progress has been made in the JONAP in education initiatives against extremism and media campaigns to promote diversity and tolerance.

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- **The second JONAP 2022-2025 demonstrates a strategic commitment to bolstering women's engagement in peace and security efforts.** This iteration is guided by principles of comprehensive security, diversity, transparency, accountability, decentralisation, and alignment with human rights obligations. Noteworthy is its focus on the intersections of gender, climate change, and security, reflecting the evolving landscape of security concerns.

Key Findings: The Philippines

- **Peace agreement provisions for women's meaningful participation in post-conflict governance have yielded mixed outcomes.** While laws passed by the new BARMM government have addressed gender equality issues, they have often done so in ways that indicate less than enthusiastic backing by the ruling group. For instance, while the Bangsamoro electoral code passed in 2023 included a gender quota of 30% of regional parties' candidates for Party List (Proportional Representation) seats, there is no requirement that women be in winnable positions on party lists, and no required minimum number of women candidates for District seats.

- **Special actions for island communities and Marawi are needed.** The communities in the island provinces of Sulu, Tawi Tawi, and Basilan, as well as the city of Marawi, which was the site of a five-month armed conflict with ISIS-linked violent extremists in 2017, are in dire need of employment, education and healthcare. For example, in Marawi many women remain in s temporary shelters where they are forced to beg for survival. Basic needs are not being met.

> **"**
> Livelihood programmes tend to leave women economically dependent rather than empowered. A cassava-planting programme, for instance, provides training and support to male farmers only. **"**
>
> DR SOCORRO L. REYES

- **Women associated with rebel groups face discrimination and dependency.** Many of the women associated with the rebel forces report facing discrimination when it comes to accessing their compensation. If they are in a relationship with another former combatant, the compensation is often given to the man only. Moreover, livelihood programmes tend to leave women economically dependent rather than empowered. A cassava-planting programme, for instance, provides training and support to male farmers only.

- **Grassroots women interviewed for this project report that the Bangsamoro Women's Commission has provided few opportunities for substantial engagement by key stakeholders.** Commissioners and local officials visit for key events, such as international celebrations to raise awareness of violence against women, but beyond this, women's engagement in policy development remains limited.

Disagreement between national and BARMM leaders over the Philippines law introducing criminal penalties for enabling child marriages may highlight future gender-based tensions with regard to regional autonomy. The law, which came into effect in late 2022, was forcefully opposed by key BARMM leaders, including women politicians associated with the ruling MILF, on the grounds that, as part of regional autonomy, the BARMM must be free to set its own standards – such as the age of marriage – when it comes to personal law. There is concern that other gender issues may be flashpoints for disagreement.

Recommendations
Sri Lanka

- **Disappearance cases must be investigated.** To demonstrate its commitment to transitional justice in Sri Lanka, the government must ensure that the OMP fulfils its mandate under the law and begins investigating disappearances cases.

- **The international community needs to put pressure on Sri Lanka through bi-lateral and multi-lateral forums to implement the mandate of the OMP.** The Sri Lanka situation should be kept on the agenda of the UN Human Rights Council. International partners should also consider travel bans on named military officers and politicians, and open files based on evidence collected by the OHCHR Sri Lanka Accountability Project so that cases involving universal jurisdiction can proceed.

Photo Credit: Vikalpa (CC BY 2.0 DEED)

share best practices, enhancing their contributions to stability, peaceful coexistence, and peacebuilding efforts.

The Philippines

- **Targeted opportunities for grassroots gender-equality and women's rights advocates should be expanded.** Two important codes remain to be passed by the interim parliament before the first elections are held in 2025: the Indigenous Peoples (IP) Code, and the Gender and Development (GAD) code. Both require close attention – the IP code in terms of IP women's representation, and the GAD Code across a range of issues, including the role of the BWC in responding to complaints, engaging on policymaking, and enforcing the 5% spending quota for women. The BWC should also strengthen its presence in and links with the region's island provinces.

- **Women combatants' voices, needs, and concerns must be addressed in an equal and inclusive manner.** Despite the many new codes that have been passed by the new BARMM parliament and new development programmes for the region, these often do not trickle down to marginalised communities, such as female ex-combatants. Women should be engaged in the implementation of these measures to ensure they genuinely benefit communities. In addition, initiatives and programmes to promote women's economic independence need to be implemented to ensure gainful sources of employment and skills training.

- **The BARMM Electoral Code must be widely disseminated to ensure the meaningful participation of women in the elections.** Five provisions in particular should be enforced: 30% of party nomination lists should be women; women should be in party leadership; party platforms should have a women's agenda; political parties should have a women and youth committee; and 50% of Tribal Assembly Conventions should be women, with Indigenous People's sectoral representatives being 1 man and 1 woman.

Jordan

- **Local and regional organisations should focus on capacity building, community engagement, addressing gender-based violence (GBV), and promoting economic empowerment.** Engaging women at the grassroots level and supporting community-led initiatives that promote dialogue and social cohesion is crucial for fostering inclusive community development.

- **International organisations should prioritise support for local women's organisations and NGOs that focus on women's empowerment, prevention of violent extremism (PVE), and peacebuilding.** These organisations can facilitate networking and collaboration opportunities to

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/gender-governance-and-peacebuilding-institutional-reform-in-jordan-the-philippines-and-sri-lanka/

PROJECT PROFILE

4.5 Legacies of the Disappeared: Missing Children and Parental Harm in Protracted Social Conflict

Hub Members

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Commemoration event in Mampujan, Colombia after 13 years of their displacement. Diana Florez

About the Project

This project examines the lingering legacies of disappearances on affected communities in protracted social conflicts. It develops the concept of 'parental harm', which is presented as harm that parents and carers experience when dependents and young people are targeted and taken away. The project defines parental harm through the lens of forced separation and harm to the ability to parent, focusing on 'everyday' experiences of harm and separation and emphasising the all-consuming impact searching for the disappeared has on families and communities. The project also examines the gendered aspects of parental harm and gendered demographics and legacies of disappearances. It assesses how disappearances affect parents and carers in gendered ways and examines visibility and invisibility in narratives and research around disappearances (e.g., the visibility of motherhood versus the invisibility of fatherhood). Further, this research examines agency and the informal and formal ways in which individuals and communities address unresolved and lingering legacies of disappearances.

The project focuses on Tamil war-affected communities in Northeastern Sri Lanka and diaspora communities in the United Kingdom. It also includes field research on everyday peacebuilding and ongoing conflict and legacies of violence in Montes de María, Colombia. To further anchor the harm of disappearances in historical and contemporary contexts, the project organised a significant workshop on 'Forced Separation' at King's College London, in collaboration with Fionnuala Ní Aoláin (Queen's University Belfast). The workshop brought together scholars and practitioners working on disappearances and separation and covered a range of geographical cases and disciplines.

Key Findings

- **'Parental harm' is a form of harm that arises when a parent or carer loses or faces the threat of losing a child.** Parental harm is a significant, and yet underacknowledged, harm in conflicts and systems of oppression where youth are targeted and separated from their carers. Parental harm includes the harm of separation (and encompasses both active acts of separation and the long-term daily reality of living with the threat of separation). It also includes harm to the ability to parent and social depletion. Parental harm can affect men and women in distinct and gendered ways. Parental harm is also accentuated in settings of widespread disappearances, where it is tied to ambiguous loss.

- **Disappearances, particularly of youth, leave lingering legacies on many aspects of life, including in the economic, social, and political realms.** Disappearances leave complex intergenerational legacies on families and family life and affect economic opportunities (e.g., giving up work and losing social security) and political behaviour, and can lead to social rifts within affected communities and even families. Disappearances and forced separation have also affected diaspora communities from conflict-affected societies (e.g., the Tamil diaspora community in the UK).

- **How wars end affects the context for addressing disappearances and the legacies of violence.** Military victory (victor's justice), militarisation, and continued repression in Sri Lanka made it harder for families to make progress with addressing disappearances. Military victory can also reduce incentives of state and military actors to make progress with transitional justice and investigations and can sustain impunity.

- **Individuals and communities use a range of formal and informal means to cope with the legacies of disappearances.** These include formal protest and activism, and informal ritual mourning and art. Everyday means of recovery and activism are often less visible and highly personal to the individual and community. Women play a key role in the informal sphere, including in everyday care work, and in rebuilding the social fabric. In some cases, women's care work within war-affected communities has spilled over into other realms, leading to inter-communal peacebuilding and reconciliation. Affected communities may prefer to refer to collective recovery efforts as activism, rather than healing or memorialisation, as they wish to keep the struggle for the disappeared open.

- **Arts-based and participatory methods yield important insights into everyday lived experiences of disappearances and into continuums of violence, care, and peacebuilding in non-war, non-peace settings.** Some affected families and communities wanted visibility in research outputs. Against one-size-fits-all ethical protocols (e.g., at some university settings), our research in some cases questioned the standard to necessarily anonymise research. Where one of the harms of disappearances is the erasure of the victim and her history, more reflection is needed on whether anonymising can problematically silence and/or remove research participants from the academic output.

Recommendations

Researchers, Universities and Academic Publishers

- **Researchers should pay greater attention to the harm experienced by carers and communities where disappearances were prevalent.** Understanding the impact on carers and communities can inform better support systems and policies for affected communities.

- **Examining the gendered and intergenerational legacies of disappearances, along with their long-term impacts, is paramount.** This allows researchers to examine the multifaceted impacts of disappearances on social, economic, and political realms and over time.

- **Researchers should further explore fatherhood in relation to disappearances.** Particularly where women have occupied a symbolic status, examining fatherhood can uncover the unique challenges and experiences faced by fathers of disappeared children.

- **Centring methodologies on victims' well-being is essential for empowering and supporting communities and families affected by disappearances.** Actively involving affected families in the research process should be central to research on the impact of disappearances.

- **Make ethical decisions on a case-by-case basis** based on the preferences of affected communities and in consultation with in-country partners.

Governments

- **Regular updates and follow-up work are essential to provide families with vital support and information at all stages of investigation.** Transparent communication channels ensure families are kept informed of any developments, while also facilitating access to necessary assistance and resources.

- **Transitional justice and reparations mechanisms should include victims in design and implementation work.** Meaningful dialogue with victim-survivors and communities builds consensus and ensures the success of transitional justice efforts.

- **Certificates of absence should be considered in lieu of death certificates where disappearance cases are unresolved.** These certificates offer families legal recognition and access to essential rights and benefits while allowing families to manage practical matters like land titles and access to social services.

Civil Society

- **Civil society should prioritise support for parents and carers who lost children,** including in the economic and social realms.

- **Support for female-headed households is crucial to address the unique challenges facing women,** especially in legal land titles, physical security risks, and social stigmas and isolation.

- **Civil society should support fathers,** particularly given that fathers may lack outlets to share with others and to seek support. This also acknowledges the pressures facing some men as breadwinners, while searching and protesting at the same time.

- **Civil society should support grassroots women's peacebuilding and community activists,** particularly in fundraising and visibility.

Tamil disappearance protest, Northern Sri Lanka.
Rebekka Friedman

International Community

- **Ongoing international involvement is crucial in transitional justice and investigative processes,** especially in countries that experienced high levels of disappearances (and particularly following military victory, where domestic processes may be viewed with suspicion and/or be highly politicised).

- **Access to funding and training is essential for grassroots organisations to promote inclusive and effective participation in transitional justice and peacebuilding efforts.** Local communities should be given the opportunity to actively engage in implementing programmes that address their specific needs.

- **Including affected families and communities is crucial for government discussions on transitional justice.** Expanding consultation processes to include marginalised communities ensures that their perspectives are heard and prioritises inclusivity in decision-making.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/legacies-of-the-disappeared-missing-children-and-parental-harm-in-protracted-social-conflict/

4.6 Political Economy of Reconciliation

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About the Project

In 2016, after over 50 years of civil war in Colombia, the government and the largest remaining guerrilla group, the FARC, signed a peace agreement. While there are still other armed groups active in many parts of the country, this was a major step towards peace and reconciliation. The work to address the consequences of conflict in a transitional Colombian society continues to this day. In this context, people's willingness to contribute to reconciliation processes, and what impact these processes have on a society are important to understand in order to implement policies and programmes that work towards a sustainable peace for all.

Based on the analysis of several representative surveys, complemented by more than 40 interviews and focus groups in all regions of Colombia, this project seeks to understand what reconciliation means in different cultural and conflict contexts and to examine how socioeconomic conditions and gender realities shape people's experience and expectations. Reconciliation has become a catch word used, and perhaps overused, without critical attention to its context-specific meaning and impact. This project tries to understand reconciliation in Colombia in all its complexity and to identify factors that influence people's understanding and attitudes towards reconciliation from the past and the present.

The project has developed analyses based on two representative surveys: One survey was funded by the USAID partner organisation ACDI/VOCA in alliance with Universidad de los Andes, which was conducted in 2017 and 2019 in 44 Colombian municipalities. The other survey was funded by the Gender, Justice and Security Hub (in alliance with the Women's Rights After War (WRAW) project). This survey was conducted in 2023 in 79 municipalities.

Project definition of reconciliation: the establishment or re-establishment of relations among groups that previously had an antagonistic relationship. Reconciliation involves a process both between individual victims and perpetrators in the conflict and within the wider society that has been divided by conflict.

Key Findings

- **Identity characteristics, people's past lived experience of the conflict and their current life situation affect the possibilities for reconciliation in post-conflict contexts.** For example, people's current economic situation impacts their attitude towards reconciliation, but there are many other intersecting factors as well. Age, gender, religion, income, region, perception of security, and experience with violence matter when it comes to defining who are the most, and the least, likely groups to be willing to engage in reconciliation efforts.

- **Gender analysis reveals key differences in how people approach reconciliation.** Men are much more likely to demand material retributions for reconciliation. Women overall are much more sceptical about reconciliation. However, both past conflict experience and empowerment matter – women who have been victims of the conflict are much more likely to believe in the importance of forgiveness and women become more optimistic about reconciliation when they feel empowered or when they hold positions of leadership.

- **Women have concerns about their safety and livelihoods within the reconciliation process.** Many women feel that their life situation is not improving. Women are more hesitant to believe the intention of combatants to demobilise and when they ask for forgiveness, and they are more worried about repeated acts of violence by armed groups. Women feel vulnerable in their communities and fear that they might again become targets of violence. Over many years there have been peaks of hope and peace

> " I was expecting that women would be the champions of reconciliation, and to me to see that women in fact are much more sceptical was interesting, was surprising. "
>
> PROFESSOR ANGELIKA RETTBERG

combined with peaks of intensified combat and conflict, so they have grown wary after many years of conflict.

- **There is a gap between the expectations and realities of reconciliation between the government and local communities.** There is a profound schism between what institutions offer and what people expect and need to recover from the continued negative impacts of the conflict. For example, some institutions might offer a new law, or a photograph of a handshake between former enemies, but what people expect and need is connected to their material livelihoods such as improvements in road and power infrastructure damaged during the conflict.

Reflection

These findings underscore the importance of advancing women's political empowerment and achieving parity in leadership roles, prompting further discussion on the ongoing challenges women face in attaining positions of authority within the state. For example, in Colombia, following the 2022 parliamentary election, women accounted for only 29% of the elected officials. In local elections, the number of women as mayors and governors has been low. In the last four elections, only between 3% and 16% of these positions were held by women. Even in the most recent local elections, women only made up 25% of all elected positions, including mayor, governor, and local council member roles. The disparity in gender representation persists, and with it, the need to promote mechanisms to overcome inequality.

Recommendations

Colombian Government and Policymakers

- **To achieve sustainable peace, reconciliation efforts must be responsive to diverse contexts and communities within Colombia.** Reconciliation is a complex process shaped by people's individual and collective identities, livelihoods, and needs. Furthermore, lived experiences in conflict can significantly affect an individual's understanding of and relationships with reconciliation. Policy responses need to be tailored to these different groups, and sector specific policies must be developed in addition to national policies. These sector-specific policies must address gender, the urban-rural divide, young people, and the major gap between what institutions offer and what people expect.

- **Reconciliation efforts should prioritise addressing women's safety and livelihood concerns.** The study's findings highlight not only the desire for reparations related to land restitution and sustaining livelihoods, but also underscore that women are more concerned than men about receiving physical and mental health support as part of the reparation measures.

> "
> To expect national policy to work for the whole country is a mistake, you need to make sure that you develop a more sector-specific policy."
>
> PROFESSOR ANGELIKA RETTBERG

- **Develop a shared understanding of the possibilities and limits of reconciliation.** Not all parts of conflict are suited to be addressed through an intentional process of bringing people together in reconciliation. Reconciliation should not become a catch-all for all crimes committed. Shared understandings of the process are essential. If definitions of reconciliation and what issues can be addressed by different actors within this transitional justice process are too divergent, the clash of expectations can lead to decreased support for and engagement with the wider peace process.

- **The divide between institutions and communities needs to be addressed by policy.** Reconciliation requires national and regional policies and programmes to be responsive to local community needs. These policies and programmes should be designed based on the input of local leaders, grass-roots community organisations, and those most directly impacted by the conflict.

Photo Credit: UN Women (CC-BY-NC-ND 2.0)

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/political-economy-of-reconciliation/

4.7 The Potentialities and Politics of Transformation

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About the Project

This study engages with the politics and potential of transformative justice in Sri Lanka in the wake of its multi-decade civil war (1983-2009). It does so by analysing rural women's access to justice in the aftermath of the war, as well as the specific legal recourses and systems to support victim-survivors of conflict related sexual violence (CRSV).

It is well documented that in Sri Lanka, women (and men) rarely seek formal justice for CRSV. The project is interested in understanding how and why this is the case. It looks at cases where women had sought formal justice but were faced with substantial challenges. In doing so, the project found a variety of challenges that work against the successful prosecution of CRSV in Sri Lanka.

The project took two sites of study: a) A rural border village and b) The Vishvamadhu case as an example of CRSV and the judicial process. Each of these case studies have gender (as a socio-cultural trope, a practice, and a lived identity), law enforcement, evidence-gathering and institutional reform as cross-cutting themes. The project engaged directly with victim-survivors, the police, judicial medical officers, and human rights defenders through a series of training workshops in several districts across the country to develop and raise awareness on a set of standard operating procedures developed by the research team based on its findings with key recommendations for future good practice.

Key Findings

- **Rural Sri Lankan women do not have homogenous experiences of living through the civil war.** The narratives of rural Sri Lankan women who experienced grave trauma in Sri Lanka's civil war point to differing memories and dissenting views on accessing the formal criminal justice system for war time harms.

- **The assumptions made about victim-survivors' motivations for formal justice need to be re-examined.** The data points to the need for nuancing a common assumption that anger and resentment against perpetrators of conflict-related violence is the norm – a conjecture also informed by an adversarial legal system. Local cultural norms and religious beliefs can weigh in, particularly when the formal judicial process is experienced as daunting and distanced. When this occurs, victim-survivors of conflict related violence can opt to walk away from the judicial process altogether.

- **Victim-survivors of conflict related sexual violence (CRSV) face multiple challenges when seeking formal justice.** There are systemic inefficiencies and shortfalls in the criminal justice system, as evidenced by the inconsistent way sexual violence is recorded in complaints at police stations, the gaps in the judicial medical examination, the guidelines followed in compiling the medical legal report, and the reporting of its findings to the court.

- **There are both long delays on the Sri Lankan legal process and inadequate communication with victim-survivors, circumventing their legal rights.** The Vishvamadu case took 11 years, indicative of the long delays in the Sri Lankan judicial process. In addition to this, the prosecutor from the Attorney General's department neither spoke to the complainant nor to her lawyers about how charges were being framed, or the subsequent appeals process. Communication from the police stopped at the High Court. These lapses meant that the principle of consultation and the participatory rights of the victim-survivor were severely undermined.

> **"** What actually happens in practice at the police station is different. For instance, one of the women police officers told me the complainant quite often comes with a male. And then the male speaks on her behalf again. And the male tends to know a little bit more Sinhala. So then, when the Sinhalese police officer takes down the complaint, your ear goes to the language you're familiar with. Right? So, at that level a kind of patriarchy as well as dominant linguistic patterns prevail. **"**
>
> PROFESSOR NELOUFER DE MEL

- **The definition of rape in the Sri Lankan penal code is based solely on penetration. There is no definition of conflict related sexual violence.** By defining these forms of violence narrowly, or not defining them at all, the state enacts a form of silencing that ignores and marginalises groups of victim-survivors. This silencing shapes how complaints are taken, how evidence is presented, and how judgements are made. It leaves the victim-survivor of CRSV out of the language of the law, and inadequately supported at a practical level.

- **Victim-survivors' voice is removed, and they are spoken for.** In the Sri Lankan legal system victim-survivors cannot give an impact statement in court. Instead, they are spoken for, and their role becomes limited to that of a witness. Here the prosecution procedure itself becomes a primary site of marginalising victim-survivors as the state prosecutes and speaks on their behalf.

- **Prosecutorial decisions and poor evidence gathering systems hamper efforts for justice for survivor-victims.** There is concern that an over-focus on the narrow legal definition of rape takes away a much-needed emphasis on the wider range of trauma of other forms of sexual violence. Furthermore, perpetrators are often not convicted based on technical grounds and the burden of evidence not being met. It was found that in certain cases, such as the Vishvamadhu case, the Judicial Medical Officers (JMO) report was inadequate, and evidence had not been gathered in a way where it stood up in court.

Recommendations

Police and Judicial Medical Officers Dealing with Gender-Based Sexual Violence

- **Adequate gender training must be provided to the police and the judicial medical officers dealing with sexual violence cases.** There must be mandatory and more robust training of police officers and judicial medical officers in sexual and gender-based violence, trauma, legal and medical procedures, and the law related to SGBV to ensure gender sensitivity and the protection of the dignity and rights of the victim-survivor.

- **Victim-survivors should be adequality supported at the point of reporting.** A police officer of whatever gender and fluent in the language preferred by the victim-survivor should be present when the complaint is made at the police station, and it is recommended that a person of choice in whom the victim-survivor has trust should be present at the medico-legal examination.

- **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) need to be available in easily accessible formats.** Guiding principles and user-friendly SOPs in an easily accessible format must be developed. These materials would provide both a practical step-by-step guide to stakeholders in cases of sexual violence (victims, befrienders and human rights defenders, the police, the JMOs, the prosecutors) to ensure that due process takes place. The project created four such sets of SOPs for the police, judicial medical officers, victim-survivors, and human rights organisations.

The Sri Lankan State and Legal System

- **A definition of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) must be legally established and the vocabulary of the law expanded to include this definition.** A legal definition of CRSV must be included in the substantive law, and a review of legal standards on consent and corroboration in cases of sexual violence must be conducted. In addition to this, there must be recognition of the impact of trauma on witness statements particularly in the context of intimidation and militarisation.

- **Legislation and existing legal provisions must be fully implemented.** Existing legislation such as the Witness Protection Act which grants victims protection and recognises victim statements must be fully implemented, and best practices from elsewhere be adapted to guarantee the participatory rights of victims in court.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit: https://thegenderhub.com/stories/the-potentialities-and-politics-of-transformation/

4.8 Social and Economic Rights in Transition

Hub Members

Professor Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Queen's University Belfast

Dr Lina Malagon, Ulster University

Professor Rory O'Connell, Ulster University

Robyn Scott, Committee on the Administration of Justice

About the Project

Understanding the form and substance of socio-economic rights protection in conflict transitions enables better policy and transformative conflict engagement. Peace agreements are less likely to be effective or sustainable if they do not address these underlying structural inequalities. To this end, this project improves knowledge of the role of social and economic rights in peace agreements and examines how civil society organisations can use peace agreements as levers for socioeconomic transformation.

Through a combination of literature reviews and interviews with trade union, human rights, women's rights, and Irish language groups, this project examines Northern Ireland (NI) as a case study, critically examining the success and challenges of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. In the context of NI, people often see the peace agreement as a "success story". However, this project exposes the limits of an imperfect and incomplete peace where some communities and voices remain missing from the discussion – frequently people concerned about social and economic justice, including social and economic rights.

Key Findings

- **Whilst the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement has advanced some important achievements, gaps remain and non-delivery and implementation of parts of the Agreement persist.** The reduction in direct physical violence has been an important outcome, but parts of the Agreement have not been implemented that would address social and economic issues, for example a Bill of Rights.

- **There is no legal way to directly enforce the Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement, and reforms that emphasise procedure are a source of frustration.** There are issues around the language deployed in some parts of the Agreement's text, where it is imprecise or aspirational, rather than including clear obligations. The consequence of this is that policies can be enacted that are not in the "spirit" of the Agreement but cannot be legally challenged. The Agreement also includes procedural reforms, which are valuable but do not guarantee just outcomes and become box ticking exercises over substantive change.

- **The inclusion of power sharing agreements has led to a state of stasis.** The inclusion of power sharing, or concessional arrangements in the Agreement has led to a system of government that is frequently in limbo as one side or the other deploys a veto power. Even when the institutions are operational, the power sharing system often means issues critical to progressive change get side-lined.

- **The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement has left key patriarchal power structures that underly the conflict untouched, and there is a lack of traction and commitment to implementing gender equality.** Whilst there are elements of the Agreement that address women's participation, this has not resulted in action to ensure women's participation in public life in Northern Ireland. The high profile successes for individual women do not translate to a commitment to gender equality, or to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda being delivered in Northern Ireland.

- **There is a large gap between the literature on conflict transformation and how this is experienced by communities in Northern Ireland.** Whilst there are bodies of academic literature on civil and political rights, less practical attention has been given to social and economic areas. Many other post-conflict countries see Northern Ireland as a positive example based on the scholarly literature and framing as a success story due to the drastic reduction of violence. But the structural violence and social and economic disadvantages that communities experienced pre-conflict remain.

> **"**
> A lot of money that comes into a conflict leaves after the conflict is solved. And one of our key takeaways from that is that if you want to invest in long-term peace processes, you'd better continue to invest in and help civil society. **"**
>
> PROFESSOR FIONNUALA NÍ AOLÁIN

- **Economic and social rights have been overlooked, not only in relation to building durable peace, but also in fostering gender equality in post-conflict societies.** A fundamental aspect that drives post conflict change for women is economic empowerment. But what we see with the Agreement is an oversight in breaking the structures that are economic barriers for women and a failure to deliver the implementation of meaningful new mechanisms of inclusion. This is also an oversight at the international level, with the Women, Peace and Security agenda, for example, which has not centred economic and social rights.

- **Civil society plays a crucial role in Northern Ireland and is an effective force for change and coalition building.** Civil society remains well-embedded in communities and has a great deal of political and strategic knowledge. Civil society organisations can name the real and pressing needs of people living in post-conflict sites rather than simply framing human rights in terms of historic grievance.

- **The commitments contained in the peace agreement on human rights have lagged behind and been under-enforced in multiple dimensions.** Human rights remain, underfunded, voluntary, feminised and inordinately dependent on the leadership of singular individuals whose capacities are continually stretched. Institutional commitment to human rights enforcement is largely a box-ticking exercise, devoid of commitment to a transformative vision of the dignity and equality of the human person.

- **The COVID-19 pandemic underscores the need for transformative human rights and equality reform.** The pandemic has harmed everyone's enjoyment of rights and liberties and has highlighted and reaffirmed existing structural inequalities in society. The pandemic has differentially affected women, carers, racial and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, older persons, those experiencing poverty and deprivation, and other groups. A crisis requires a societal response, and that societal response must deliver for everyone.

Recommendations

Northern Ireland Assembly, UK Government, Donors and Funders

- **Northern Ireland should be recognised as a post-conflict context.** For a just and sustainable peace to be possible in Northern Ireland, the UK Government must acknowledge the ongoing legacies and impacts of this conflict. Legislation and policies must be responsive to the needs of victims of the conflict and proactively invest in the post-conflict work needed to end the sequence of this conflict.

- **A bespoke Bill of Rights is needed in Northern Ireland to address the underpinning causes of the conflict and social problems in this jurisdiction.** Among the important causes of the conflict were violations of a wide range of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. These include structural problems and inequalities with housing rights, employment rights and cultural rights. A Bill of Rights has strong cross-community potential. This is especially true for the types of interests protected by social and economic rights: adequate housing, access to health care, access to employment and education are rights that appeal across the traditional divide in this jurisdiction, and they also appeal to many who do not identify with the main traditions.

- **Civil society work needs to be better harnessed and supported.** NGOs embracing the full diversity of human rights claims, focusing on the indivisibility of rights, specifically civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, are better placed to be relevant to the emerging diversity of post-conflict rights claims. Their work should be better supported and funded.

Photo Credit: Jan Brennen on Unsplash

Civil Rights Organisations

- **Organisations need to broaden their agenda and objectives, embracing the full diversity of human rights claims, and working to develop solidarity across wider civil society.** Gender-mainstreaming across traditional human rights focused NGO's, from women's equality to LGBTIQ+ affirmation, is an essential aspect of building legitimacy within, and relationships with, contemporary equality movements.

Researchers and Academics

- **There is a need to think differently about what is or is not a socio-economic right in the context of a peace agreement.** This analysis is important for the construction of knowledge around socio-economic rights and peace agreements and drawing key actors' attention to socio-economic rights.

> "
> ...we work with LGBTIQ+ groups, women's rights groups, women's reproductive rights and Irish language speakers, all politically contentious issues, all with a high level of solidarity, but with the rule that everything is on the table and that we must deal with and not ignore these issues. "
>
> WOMEN'S RIGHTS DEFENDER

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit: https://thegenderhub.com/stories/social-and-economic-rights-in-transition/

4.9 Women's Political and Economic Empowerment

Hub Members

Dr María del Pilar López-Uribe, Universidad de los Andes
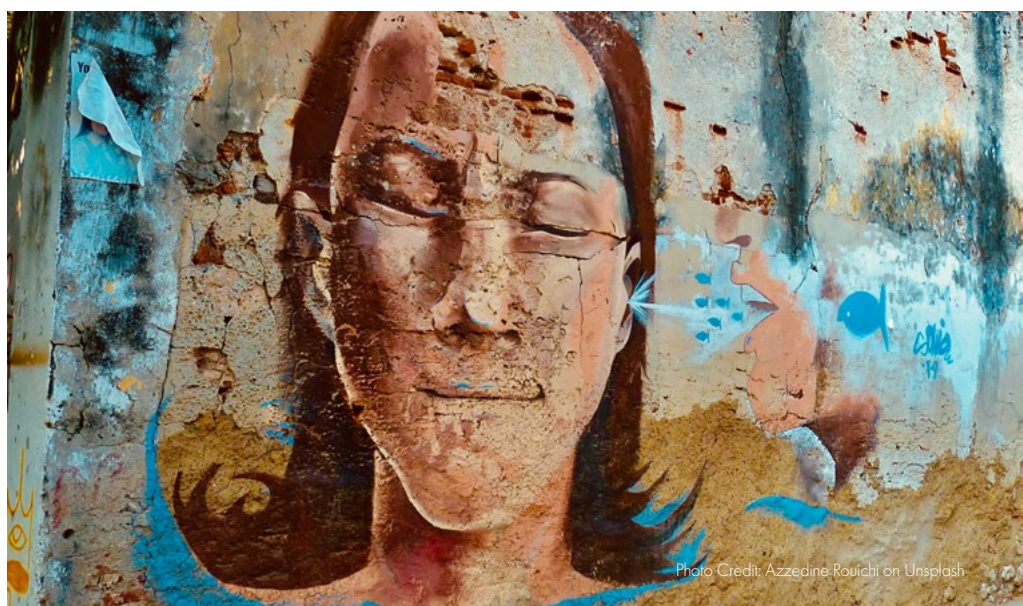
Photo Credit: Azzedine Rouichi on Unsplash

About the Project

Current data on political and economic empowerment and representation in Colombia is not disaggregated by gender, and in some cases, gender has not even been documented. This gender disaggregated data is central to giving policymakers, the government and researchers a greater understanding of the current levels of women's political and economic empowerment and representation in the country. It also allows for evidence-based reviews on the effectiveness of current policies and laws, and the improved implementation of policies to enhance women's political participation in the country.

This project's historical dataset is the first in Colombia to bring this data together and disaggregate it by gender. Data has been gathered where available since 1958 when women were first given the vote in Colombia. This dataset documents how many women voted in all 1,123 municipalities of Colombia, how many women candidates ran, and how many women were elected at the municipal and national level at every election since 1958.

Key Findings: Political Empowerment

- **Cultural barriers to women's participation remain.** Cultural norms, such as "women do not make good leaders", persist in Colombia. These norms are not being recognised nor challenged. This cultural environment does not make politics a tempting or easy place for women. There is also a general attitude that understanding how many women and men vote is irrelevant.

- **Political gender quotas are not leading to better representation of women in politics.** The worst representation of women happens at regional and mayoral elections, where only 12% of mayors are women, and only 6% of governors are women. Whilst at the national level the 50/50 gender quota is not translating to more women being elected. For example, in 2018 in the House of Representatives only 31 women were elected as opposed to 139 men, and in the Senate 24 women were elected whilst 82 men were elected.

- **Key obstacles in accessing data on political participation remain.** Where there is data, obstacles to accessing this continue post COVID-19 where restrictions to archives and data access remain. Beyond these restrictions, since the 1990s gender disaggregated data has not been collected at the point where people vote.

- **Political participation is connected to economic opportunity.** There is a connection between the lack of women's political representation and economic empowerment. It is hard for women to reach political positions, and normally those that do come from an urban context and are well educated.

> "
> There is a correlation between this lack of women's representation and economic empowerment. "
>
> DR MARÍA DEL PILAR LÓPEZ-URIBE

Recommendations: Political Empowerment

Government and Local Communities

- **There needs to be a change in the cultural environment** surrounding politics and a shift in the social perceptions of women and their leadership skills if we are to see the full political participation of women.

Political Parties

- **It is important that political parties support their female candidates more actively through economic support and visibility within their own parties.** Political parties and governments should invest in training young female political leaders. These trainings should include knowledge of how the state works, empowerment and self-confidence among others.

Key Findings: Economic Empowerment

- **There is an urban-rural divide in women's economic access and opportunities.** There is a large gap between the economic realities and rights of urban women and rural women across all indicators, including the care economy, education, land access and ownership, access to credit, access to the health systems and property ownership. This is also true for other indicators that are more difficult to observe, for example bargaining power within households and the informal labour market. Improvement in all of these areas has been very slow for rural women, in comparison to women as a whole in Colombia.

- **Women's access to education is limited.** Despite progress in the levels of women who have access to and have completed education in Colombia, gender and urban-rural gaps persists. The data shows that almost 60% of rural women have only primary education, and education enrolment rates remain higher for male students across Colombia.

- **Care labour is gendered and unequal.** The 2010 1413 Law, which recognises unpaid work as a contribution to the economy, has been insufficient in terms of reaching gender equality in the care market economy. Unpaid work is still done mostly by women in Colombian society, where almost 7 hours a day is dedicated to the care economy by women within the household, compared to less than two hours a day by men. This prevents equal participation in the labour market, directly affecting women's economic independence and empowerment.

- **Despite recent efforts, women still lack equal land rights and opportunities.** Data from the last 100 years shows that 80% of public land allocations have been given to men, and only 20% given to women. Despite the 2022 goal for 12,142 women to benefit from land tenure rights, between January and May 2018, only 832 women had benefited from land allocation and the formalisation processes. This is particularly stark for rural women as land is their main economic asset and there are higher poverty rates (37.4%), compared to a much lower rate (12%) for women in urban areas.

- **Access to public services remains a challenge for some women.** Access to health, pension, and credit has not changed significantly in the last two decades for rural women, whose financial inclusion is lowest relative to rural men and urban women.

- **Labour market participation is unequal.** Although the gender gap in labour market participation has been narrowing, women still have significantly lower labour market participation rates. For example, in 2017 75% of men in Colombia participated in the labour market, compared to 55% of women.

Photo Credit: Jorge Gardner on Unsplash

"
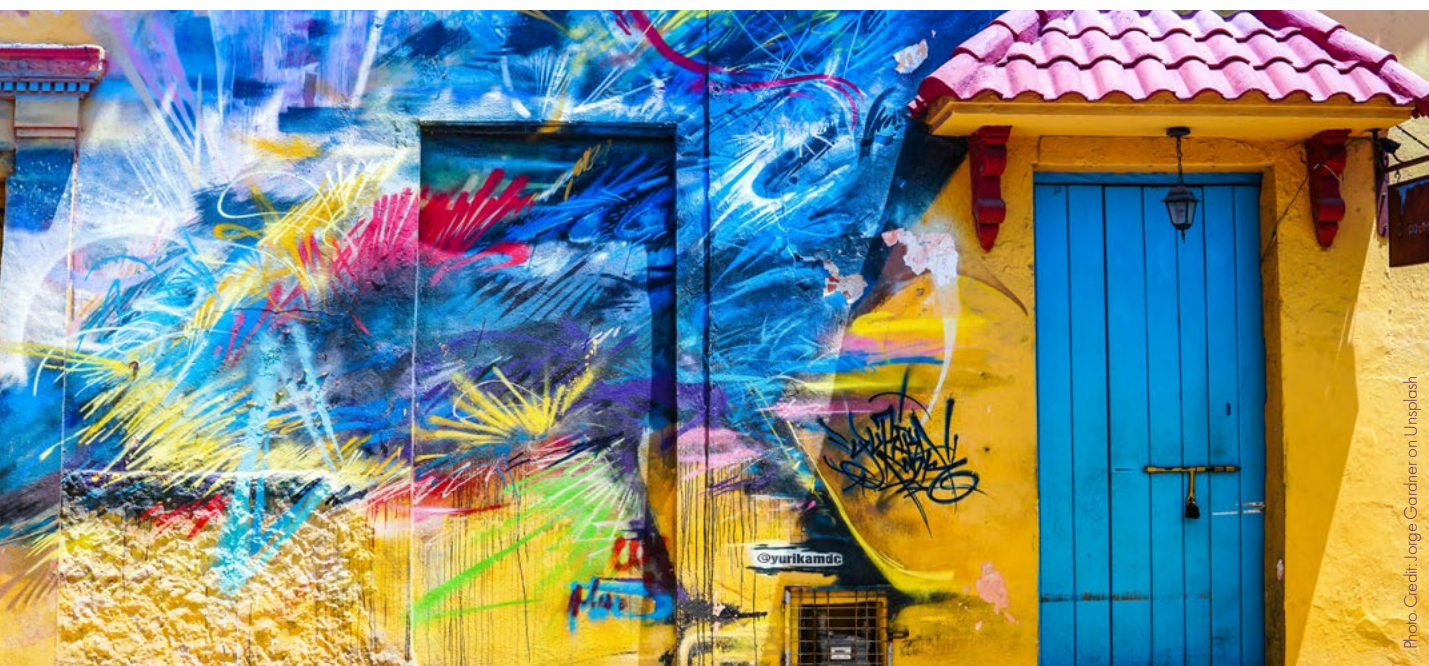
That's the history of Colombia, right? A lot of laws with a lot of good intentions, but in practice they haven't been applied, they are not reaching the target population."

DR MARÍA DEL PILAR LÓPEZ-URIBE

Recommendations: Economic Empowerment

Government and Academia

- **An intersectional approach is needed in both research and the process of gathering data to inform government policies and practices for effective implementation of laws designed to increase women's economic participation.** Both the data gathering process and evidence informed policies should take into account not only the urban-rural divide, but also differences across racial identities, sexualities, class and other forms of identities that are affecting women's economic inclusion.

- **Evidence is crucial to show the (in)effectiveness of laws and policies.** As much data and evidence as possible should be gathered to inform decisions on the effectiveness of policies implemented, and those being developed. This data should always be disaggregated by gender.

Government and Policymakers

- **The economic empowerment of rural women should be a policy priority and efforts made to ensure that policies move from paper to being implemented on the ground.** The government and policymakers need to reach out to women in rural communities, so they are no longer isolated from the system and are central to laws and policies relating to women's economic empowerment.

Photo Credit: Jorge Gardner on Unsplash

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/womens-political-empowerment/

4.10 Women's Rights After War

Hub Members

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Dr Ana María Montoya, World Justice Project

About the Project

In the wake of war, gender equality reforms have become part of a standard toolkit for recovery. The Women's Rights After War (WRAW) project aims to understand which women benefit from women's empowerment reforms in the aftermath of armed conflict. The project poses three core questions: (1) Who benefits, and why, from postwar gender reforms? (2) How does the implementation of these reforms shape social divisions, peace, and security? And finally, (3) how are differently situated women able to take advantage of the rights and empowerment opportunities presented? In attending to these questions, the project aims to advance women's rights and equality in the aftermath of war – vital prerequisites for security and democracy. The project also seeks to question mainstream "women's empowerment," which directly informs advocacy, policy, and legal efforts directed at securing women's rights and equality with men.

Using an innovative multi-stage and multi-method research design – a collection of micro-projects within the overall project – WRAW compares and evaluates women's rights reforms in six countries that have experienced armed conflict since 1980: Nepal, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq, Colombia, Sri Lanka, and Rwanda. The project uses interviews, systematic analysis of legislation, laws, and polices, participatory workshops, and arts-based methods to conduct embedded fieldwork and to critically and creatively examine reforms across a number of issue areas.

Key Findings

- **There has been a decrease and dilution of international funding and attention dedicated to women's rights, empowerment, and gender equality over the past five years.** Prior to this project, there was a period of sustained international funding and attention for these issues. However, over the past five years, attention has been dwindling as other significant challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic and global gender backlash emerged. Thus, the dynamics the project calls attention to are even more pronounced given this backlash, resistance, resources shortages, and shift in attention.

- **A resurgent patriarchal backlash has happened across all countries in the project, but for various reasons.** In some cases, this backlash has been able to emerge in a context where aid programmes and programmes focusing on gender have been done through a narrow lens where they have inadvertently entrenched patriarchal and militarist norms. In other contexts, women's rights have been co-opted for ethno-nationalist objectives and political agendas.

- **International agendas and programming have taken a narrow lens to women's rights and gender justice and an intersectional approach is yet to be mainstreamed.** International frameworks, such as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and its National Action Plans (NAPs) are applied through a narrow lens that looks at women as one category without thinking of the many different ways that political, social, economic, and geographic identities map onto peoples' collective sense of wellbeing and security. There has been a critical shift to thinking intersectionally about gender work, but this has not yet been mainstreamed and there is less programming and policy work with this approach compared to the work that started in 2000 with the adoption of the first WPS Resolution (1325).

- **International frameworks are not reaching, nor are they responsive to, the reality of life at the grassroots level and remain a fundamentally elitist venture.** The global discourse that has emerged from UNSC 1325 on WPS, and many subsequent global convenings on women's rights, have been adopted by elites who have internalised these frameworks and see them as effective tools for change in their countries. But insufficient work has been done to diffuse these norms and frameworks at the grassroots level, where many women in rural communities have not even heard of these agendas. These frameworks overlook the

> **"**
> To actually create a gender just world, it will require not only the integration of women into systems that already exist, it will actually require a reimagining and rebuilding of some of these systems in a way that is more inclusive and more just for everybody. **"**
>
> DR MARIE BERRY

structural conditions that need to be met first, meaning they become disconnected from immediate needs of women.

- **Global democratic decline and increased militarism is evidence of the failures of post-conflict transitions and programming to lead to sustained peace and gender equity amidst democratic decline.** The international communities' programmes and UN Resolutions have not held up against the rapid backsliding of rights globally, as evidenced by the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Sudan, Israel and Gaza and other global conflicts. These global events and militarised responses have exposed the inability of the international community's programmes and resolutions designed to advance women's rights to respond in a meaningful way when there is a backsliding of these rights, and their inability to address and overcome the systems of patriarchy, militarism, imperialism and capitalism that lead to this.

- **Women's political participation is conditioned by other aspects of conflict positionality.** In Colombia, Nepal, Rwanda and Sri Lanka for example, women's access to power is conditioned by their relationship to relevant political elites or power brokers, during and even prior to the war. This speaks to the temporality and adaptability of structures of domination, oppression and violence in the ways in which women's power is mediated and excised vis-à-vis their relationship to these structures and those who uphold them.

- **The political instrumentalisation of women's rights is persistent.** Many political parties or key political actors connected to the conflicts examined in this project benefit from the extension of political opportunities for women. For example, by including women they gain votes and seats while claiming they are committed to democratic principles

> "
> When you haven't built power in communities so that they can articulate their own visions of the future then you don't have any way of holding the elites accountable. "
>
> DR MARIE BERRY

and practices and an inclusive politics. Who benefits are not the individual women that are supposedly empowered to advance a feminist agenda, but the parties themselves that have been able to navigate a way of gaining more power.

- **Post-conflict advocacy for women's rights elevates particular dynamics of conflict violence over other structural forms of violence.** A lot of efforts to advance women's rights after war has relied on implicit hierarchies of violence, where global advocacy policymaking discourses on women's rights are structured to focus on singular facets of conflict rather than looking at the different structural layers and dynamics. These overlooked dynamics are often historical forms of discrimination and marginalisation, environmental violence, and harmful gender norms that have reverberating effects, but are not often integrated into advocacy and policy, or oftentimes are not seen as part of the same systems that led to the conflict. These other systems of violence require similar forms of repair.

- **Conflict affected women and communities hold the expertise when it comes to change and reforms for sustainable peace.** All of the required expertise for sustainable peace does not sit with the people making laws or creating rights in international institutions. Rather, it sits with people who experience the fallout of conflict first-hand. These individuals and communities have the expertise and the knowledge over the things that they need to change their situation and to create and build peace.

Recommendations

Policymakers

- **Close the gap between the political rhetoric advocating women's rights after war and the reality of limited implementation and decontextualised solutions experienced by those most directly affected.** There is an urgent need to address the widespread disconnects between the energy, resourcing and formality of women's right reforms, and the actual lived experiences of communities. These communities need to have a meaningful place at the table to help inform and shape the conversations involving policy changes. Even more critically, policymakers need to ensure that grassroots women – those often far removed from elite politics or institutionalised spaces – are driving forces in efforts to build women's power.

Academia and Researchers

- **The process of research matters just as much, if not more, than the products of research.** Researchers should be intentional in their research design to avoid the replication of harmful power dynamics between researchers and the communities they work with and learn from. Feminist research praxis invites us to think differently about what questions we ask, how we make decisions throughout the research process, and how we present our "findings."

> "
> I think oftentimes research findings and outputs are very important, and they are also in some ways tied to this productivity mill, in which we tend to value easy, clean talking points over complexity and richness. "
>
> DR MARIE BERRY

CASE STUDY

Visions of Resistance: Collage & Political Art

In July 2023, the project held a photographic collage workshop in Bogotá, Colombia, focused on amplifying the voices of women affected by the Colombian conflict through artistic expression. Participants were asked to assemble images that have a special significance from their own experience, including family photographs as well as domestic objects with special significance such as flowers, fabrics, stuffed animals, and newspapers.

This initiative engages artists from both Argentina and Colombia as a form of regional solidarity and an amendment to an artificial academic bifurcation. Both countries experienced horrific acts of political violence, often gendered in nature, during the late 20th century, but are seldom put into dialogue. Despite the locus of violence differing between a military dictatorship in Argentina and an asymmetric civil war in Colombia, essential parallels exist between the lived experience of civilians during these periods, particularly for women. Enforced disappearance became a standard repertoire of violence against civilians in both contexts, as did sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence, fracturing families and embedding loss into the countries' social fabrics.

Women in both contexts during and after war mobilized around a collective identity associated with their gender. This exhibition, as part of the broader WRAW project, serves as a testament to the multi-faceted roles that women have played during war and its aftermath. To explore further regional forms of resistance and activist knowledge production, this exhibition highlights the role of art in fostering a political consciousness of women as not only victims, but also agents of change.

> "
> Art, in its capacity to restructure both the material world and our attention to it, serves a role in preserving the dignity of humans during war and its aftermath. Visual art can contest the silence and complicity that can affect a post-conflict society, promoting memory and attention to the past where amnesia might otherwise take hold. Art can subvert narratives of trauma and paranoia by centring the experiences of victims and survivors in public consciousness. It is with this reparative potential that art can serve as a source of resistance in women's lives during and after war. "

VISIONS OF RESISTANCE: COLLAGE & POLITICAL ART EXHIBITION BOOKLET (2023)

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/womens-rights-after-war/

Livelihood, Land and Rights

This chapter examines the theme of **Livelihood, Land and Rights** across the Hub's research. The chapter starts with a summary of the theme, followed by detailed findings and recommendations from each of the four Hub projects researching these topics.

5.1 **Livelihood, Land and Rights**

Hub Co-Directors

Dr Nelson Camilo Sanchez, Dejusticia

Dr Josephine Ahikire, Makerere University
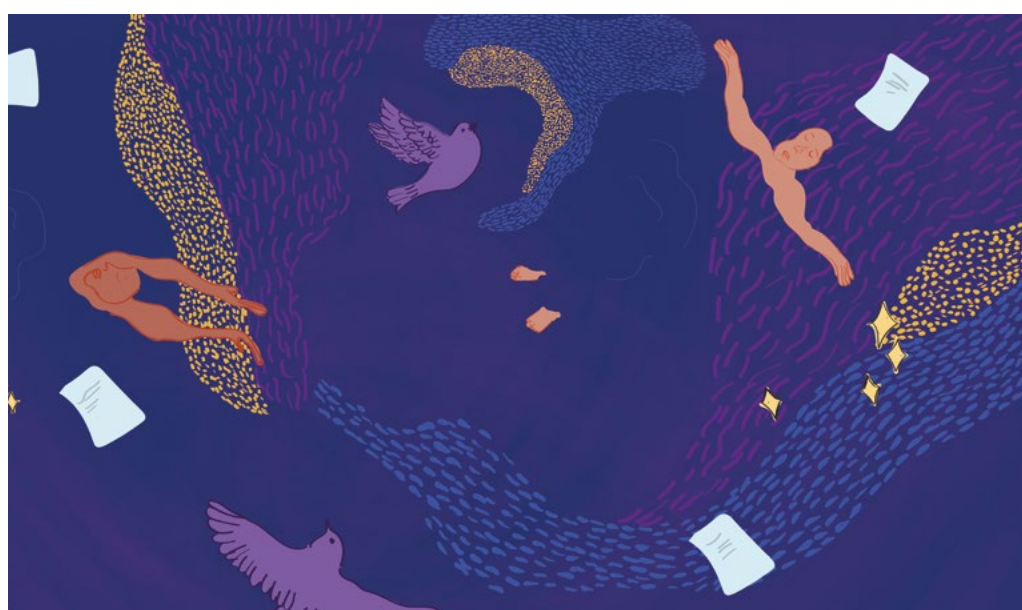
The Livelihood, Land and Rights stream delves into the post-conflict landscape, focusing on the interplay between transitional justice, gendered power relations and socio-economic rights. It recognises the often-neglected aspects of economic and social rights, particularly in relation to land and property issues, within the framework of transitional justice and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The research acknowledges the unique challenges faced by women, who often emerge as heads of household post-conflict, yet struggle with property ownership and land access due to pre-existing discrimination and exclusion.

This stream incorporates diverse projects from Uganda, Sri Lanka, Colombia and Sierra Leone, offering comparative insights into the gendered intersections of livelihoods, land and rights. These projects reveal common themes of gendered inequality in land ownership, the influence of traditional and informal institutions, and the challenges faced in implementing transitional justice policies effectively.

- **Sri Lanka – Land Ownership and Women's Empowerment:** This project reveals the complexities of land ownership in post-war Sri Lanka, governed by a mix of customary and general laws. Despite legal provisions for equal inheritance rights, implementation issues persist, with many women unaware of their rights. The research underscores the diverse perceptions among women regarding land ownership and highlights the lasting impacts of colonial rule on land tenure and inheritance practices. Women face numerous barriers in land access, which significantly impacts their economic empowerment and social well-being.

- **Uganda – Beyond War Compensation:** Focusing on Northern Uganda, this project examines land conflicts post-conflict and their gendered implications, emphasising the critical role of women's agency in land rights claims. Traditional justice mechanisms, such as Rwot Okoro and Rwot Kweri, play a significant role in land dispute mediation, centring women's knowledge and rights. However, the project identifies ongoing challenges, including social struggles and a lack of universal recognition of the conflict's end, complicating the recovery process.

- **Colombia – Land Reform, Peace and Informal Institutions:** This project highlights the challenges in implementing land restitution and transitional justice measures in Colombia. Criticisms point to the weak institutional design and the tendency of officials to default to traditional responses under pressure. The project underscores the need for more effective formal and informal institutions and bureaucracies in land restitution programs, stressing their role in bridging the gap between policy and practice.

- **Sierra Leone – Land Policy, Gender and Plural Legal Systems:** The study focuses on the challenges women face in accessing land amidst patriarchal structures and cultural norms. It emphasises the importance of traditional leaders, local government and police in land governance, yet notes the limitations and barriers women face in these male-dominated spaces. The commercialisation of land and private sector investments are identified as key factors influencing gender justice and women's land rights, necessitating policy and governance changes to promote equitable access.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Across these projects, several Key Findings and Recommendations emerge:

- **Legal Pluralism and Implementation Gaps:** All projects highlight the coexistence of customary and general laws, revealing gaps in implementation that disproportionately affect women. There is a need for legal reform, cultural transformation and increased awareness to ensure women's rights are upheld.

- **Role of Traditional and Informal Institutions:** The importance of traditional and informal institutions in mediating land disputes and supporting women's rights is evident. Their potential in enhancing gender justice and social cohesion, especially in post-conflict settings, is significant.

- **Challenges in Transitional Justice and Land Restitution:** The projects demonstrate the complexities in implementing transitional justice measures, particularly in land restitution. There is a call for stronger institutional frameworks and more transparent processes to bridge the gap between law and practice.

- **Economic Empowerment and Social Well-being:** The studies collectively affirm that land ownership is crucial for women's economic empowerment and overall well-being. Addressing barriers to land access and ownership is essential for advancing gender equality.

- **Patriarchal Structures and Cultural Norms:** A recurring theme is the impact of patriarchal structures and cultural norms on women's land rights. Efforts to dismantle these norms and promote gender equality in land governance are crucial.

- **Policy and Governance Reforms:** There is a unanimous call for policy and governance reforms to ensure equitable land access for women. This includes enforcing laws like the Sierra Leone Customary Land Rights Act and engaging women in decision-making processes.

- **Awareness and Advocacy:** Raising awareness and advocating for women's land rights through community engagement and dialogues is vital. This should be complemented by legal aid and support for women navigating land dispute resolution mechanisms.

PROJECT PROFILE

5.2 Beyond War Compensation

Hub Members

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About the Project

Ever since the guns went silent after a two-decade war, Northern Uganda has seen multiple government programmes focused on reconstruction and compensation. There were, for example, the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) and its successor programme, the Peace Recovery and Development Programme (PRDP), as well as a number of compensation schemes for lost property. Belatedly, these have been accompanied by accountability efforts at both international and domestic levels, using the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Crimes Division (ICD) to bring alleged perpetrators to justice.

Despite the significant investments already made by the state and the international community in these efforts, myriad post-war conflicts on gender inequalities, land conflicts and constrained livelihoods continue to persist in the Acholi sub-region of the country. These social and gendered inequalities, understood by communities as 'the new war fronts,' threaten social cohesion, gender justice and inclusive peace. These challenges were exacerbated even further by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdown measures.

Using a combination of interviews, observations, group dialogues, and participatory arts-based methods, such a community theatre performance, this project aims to improve understanding of the gender realities of post-war conflicts associated with land acquisition and livelihoods, including women and children's experiences and agency in land rights claims.

Key Findings

- **'Floating populations' and generational conflict remain unaddressed.** There are a range of people described as being a part of 'floating populations' including children born in camps, people who returned from the bush, people with no known parents born as a result of sexual violence, people with no clan identity, and people with no ancestral land. The feeling of us vs. them between the elder generation and the floating populations is deeply entrenched in communities' everyday practices and communication. Yet, these social struggles are not considered a priority in post-conflict recovery efforts.

- **Children born in this context are labelled as 'aguu' and are socially stigmatised, leading to new layers of community conflict.** Children born in captivity, or those whose fathers are unknown, are being denied social support and a sense of belonging. These children should be acknowledged as victims of the conflict. Many do not know their fathers, but these children could be brought into their mother's clan. However, the lack of post-conflict social cohesion mechanisms means they are denied access to land and a livelihood, forcing them to live on the streets and to steal to survive. This in turn creates a new layer of conflict and abuse in the community.

- **Land conflict is the most widespread and complex form of social discontent.** Land claims are the most prevalent form of conflict affecting almost all spheres of community in the Acholi sub-region. Land conflicts are woven in a complex terrain of changing household relations, changing land tenure systems, and the increasing commercialisation of land.

- **Commercialisation of land erodes community ties and trust.** There is a perceived erosion of ancestral restrictions on land, where elders who used to protect customary land are quickly giving in to the sale of such land in what is described as the "silent wealth war". This shift towards the individualisation and marketisation of land will have multi-generational impacts and it has already led to low public trust in places where capitalist venture is seen to trump cultural norms. This loss of trust is decreasing the perceived legitimacy and autonomy of cultural institutions to regulate social relations and offer guidance and mediation in post-war conflicts.

> **"** You are talking about absences, you are talking about abuses, and you're talking about denial of livelihood. **"**
>
> DR JOSEPHINE AHIKIRE

- **The COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictive measures introduced to reduce the spread of the virus were overwhelmingly disruptive and revealed gaps in post-conflict planning.** The pandemic negatively affected almost every aspect of people's lives, particularly their livelihoods. Yet, it was also revealing: the pandemic lifted the lid on the post-conflict communities, exposing the glaring gaps in post conflict programming – what the participants term 'our true colours'. The pandemic also exposed inadequacies in social recovery, bringing to the fore often taken-for-granted social aspects of the post-conflict situation such as increasing intra-family land conflicts, poverty, sexual and gender-based violence and trauma.

Photo Credit: Itote Rubombora on Unsplash

Recommendations

National and Local Government of Uganda

- **Post-conflict programming must account for economic and social community needs.** For example, the prioritisation of investment in physical infrastructure and economic ventures must take into account the social aspects of post-conflict recovery.

- **Children born in captivity and/or as a result of sexual violence (with unknown fathers) should have access to national identity cards and passports.** The issuing of national identity cards currently requires identification of a clan. In the case of children born of war who are not given a clan identity, this is a barrier to accessing national identity cards and passports. This then means they are denied access to many services. This barrier should be removed, and all children born of the conflict should be given citizenship.

- **Children born of war must be acknowledged as victims of the conflict, and the securitised approach to dealing with them must be replaced with one that centres social cohesion and their livelihood needs.** The response to the 'aguu' who are forced to steal from the markets for a livelihood has been overly patriarchal and securitised. It must be recognised that approaching these children as criminals is fracturing social cohesion attempts. Instead, inclusive programmes need to be developed to engage with this 'floating population' and to co-develop sustainable alternative livelihoods that move away from the culture of stealing to survive.

Communities and Cultural Institutions

- **New ways of community belonging need to be embraced when clan structures are broken.** To ensure the 'aguu' are rightly acknowledged as victims of the conflict, it must be recognised that the clan system has

> **"**
> In many cases, we tend to recreate stereotypes, recreate generalisations because we've not allowed the situation on the ground to speak to us. **"**
>
> DR JOSEPHINE AHIKIRE

broken down when they have been denied identity in either their mother's or father's clan. In this context there must be a community acceptance of new concepts of belonging that are not based solely on fatherhood and parental lineage, but on the basis of belonging to a specific community.

- **Prioritise post-war social identity through programmes to rediscover social connectedness, to encourage intergenerational relationships, and to give a cohesive sense of identity to the communities.** This cultural heritage and sense of identity in the Acholi community is a core aspect of returning to social cohesion, gender justice and inclusive peace. There needs to be ongoing community conversations to make post-conflict conflicts more visible and discussed. Communal approaches rooted in the practices of belonging and inclusivity should replace an overreliance on security frameworks.

Researchers

- Be reflexive throughout the research process. Research on gender justice and inclusive peace requires a constant process of challenging one's own assumptions and categorisations. This project challenged the research team to think critically and expansively about what counts as a 'gender issue'. Gender permeates the lived experiences of all those living in post-war contexts, and as this research showed, it can have particular impacts on the children's lives.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/beyond-war-compensation/

5.3 Land Policy, Gender and Plural Legal Systems

Hub Members

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Dr Mohamed Sesay, York University

About the Project

This project explores the impact of contemporary land policy on gender justice within the context of Sierra Leone's legally pluralistic, post-colonial and post-conflict context. While Sierra Leone has several progressive laws and policies regarding women's rights, human rights and property rights, there remains a disjuncture between political rhetoric and policy aspirations on the one hand and practical implementation and impact on women's daily lives on the other. Furthermore, Sierra Leone's economic recovery and development strategy has prioritised foreign direct investment and private sector-led growth. As such there is a lack of political will to prioritise or balance gender justice with corporate interest in land, where post-war development has come at the expense of women's right to land and livelihood.

This project uses qualitative fieldwork and empirical analysis to critically examine this issue across four interrelated elements: (1) socio-legal and policy frameworks, (2) engagement and adaptation of customary tenure, (3) tenurial constraints and opportunities, and (4) current policy positions and reform debates. Although interested in the tenure rights of vulnerable people in general, the project focuses specifically on the tenurial (in)security of women, structures and practices that shape women's land rights, and their experiences within pluralistic legal regimes.

Key Findings

- **Women in rural areas still experience significant gender-based barriers to exercising their tenurial rights to family and communal land, which remains governed by customary law.** Several laws and policies have been passed to ensure equal ownership, access and use of land by women in Sierra Leone, including the Devolution of Estate Act (2007), Land Policy (2015), National Land Commission Act (2022) and Customary Land Rights Act (2022). While these laws and policies are progressive, they have very little impact in local communities due to poor implementation and structural issues.

- **Poverty, gender and region limit access to land.** Poverty is the main factor limiting access to and acquisition of land, followed by being a migrant or non-local in a community. This is particularly the case for women who, to different extents depending on their location, also face marginalisation based on cultural patriarchal norms. In the Pujehun District in the South and Western Area Districts in and near Freetown, women are perceived to have equal access to land if they can afford it. However, in Bombali District in the North and Kono District in the East there is differential access to land for men and women influenced by cultural gender norms.

- **Land disputes and land grabbing continue.** Post-war competition for land has led to major land-related disputes, the most prominent being land grabbing from the poor or those with little or no access to justice. This issue is mostly prevalent in the Western Area Districts where land is most expensive given the proximity to the capital, Freetown. In the provinces, land disputes are mostly related to large scale land acquisition by corporate agents. Kono, a diamond mining district, is also particularly affected by land grabbing.

- **Post-war economic recovery and corporate interest in land has surprisingly created space for women to be a** part of conversations on land governance and its use. The conflict and subsequent commercialisation of land has shifted the way local communities identify with and measure the value of land. In some ways this has opened up conversations about inclusive ownership and access, with women advocating for themselves in family and community discussions. Post-war economic recovery in this sense is challenging patriarchal norms and traditions about land rights and land governance. However, women's overall low socioeconomic status remains a greater threat to tenurial security.

- **While patriarchy is being challenged, capitalism is being reinforced.** Whilst there has been a shift in women's participation in conversations about family and community land, those who profit the most are the companies and other owners of capital at both local and global levels. These companies are taking advantage of the liberalisation of the local economy to deny access to land or dispossess women of the land they have been fighting for. The capitalist economy is not paying attention to social justice and women's economic empowerment, and it inhibits the development and sustainability of long-term gender justice and inclusive peace in the country.

- **Neoliberal reforms are often seen as ways to 'emancipate women' but they are performative for international audiences.** State actors and institutions often complicate the gender equality agenda, and their presence is creating more opportunities for the actors themselves than for the women. Laws and policies are created for outside audiences and the international community, instead of a genuine interest in helping those who are marginalised, particularly rural women.

- **Women have limited access to representation in land dispute mechanisms.** Representation for women during land disputes is very limited, and some women have limited access to the available justice mechanisms and support services. However, whilst there have been cases where there are delays in redressing disputes affecting women, this does not seem to be systematic.

> *The state structure itself is a colonial creation. So, nobody is revisiting what kind of state we need in postcolonial Africa. I think that remains a fundamental structural question.*
>
> DR MOHAMED SESAY

Recommendations

Government of Sierra Leone

- **Legal and policy reforms need to be strengthened and inclusive of women in their implementation.** The laws and policies that make provisions for guaranteeing equal ownership and access to land for women must be fully implemented by providing adequate resources, training, personnel and oversight. This includes enacting regulations that enable the equitable implementation of the National Land Commission Act, Customary Land Rights Act and Gender Empowerment Act, through a broad-based consultative process. Women in local communities, not just educated and elite women, should be included in these processes.

- **Demonstrate political will to protect the rights of women when they conflict with corporate land interests.** The current market-driven economic system, which is underpinned by capitalist values, does not empower women economically. The laws and policies about land rights must temper or balance corporate interests with gender justice, and legal loopholes must be corrected so these rights are not compromised for capitalist gain.

Government of Sierra Leone and International Donors

- **Support civil society and local organisations working on the ground.** These organisations are working in communities where structural issues reproduce disadvantages for women every day. Civil society and local groups are using all resources available to implement the laws and policies in meaningful ways. They should be engaged, funded and better supported at a national and local level to continue this vital work.

> **"**
> We are seeing that even some of the good elements of African tradition, they are being destabilised, they are being gradually eliminated. And it's because of this sort of blunt liberal tool that tends to see tradition as completely inimical to progress. **"**
>
> DR MOHAMED SESAY

Traditional Authorities

- **Customary law should be reformed to allow equal representation and participation of women in decision making, including in committees set up to manage land and land resources.** As customary law is dynamic, rules that discriminate against women should be changed to allow greater female participation in the rural economy and governance.

Civil Society Organisations and NGOs

- **Paralegal and dispute resolution assistance should be enhanced to ensure that women are fairly represented in land deals and have access to remedy when their rights are violated.** While it may take a while for the formal state system to reach all rural communities and provide appropriate justice, the capacity of non-state actors must be expanded to help women navigate existing systems of governance and justice. They must also help with education and information sharing about new laws and policies that are beneficial to women, especially in poor rural communities.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/land-policy-gender-and-plural-legal-systems/

5.4 Land Reform, Peace and Informal Institutions

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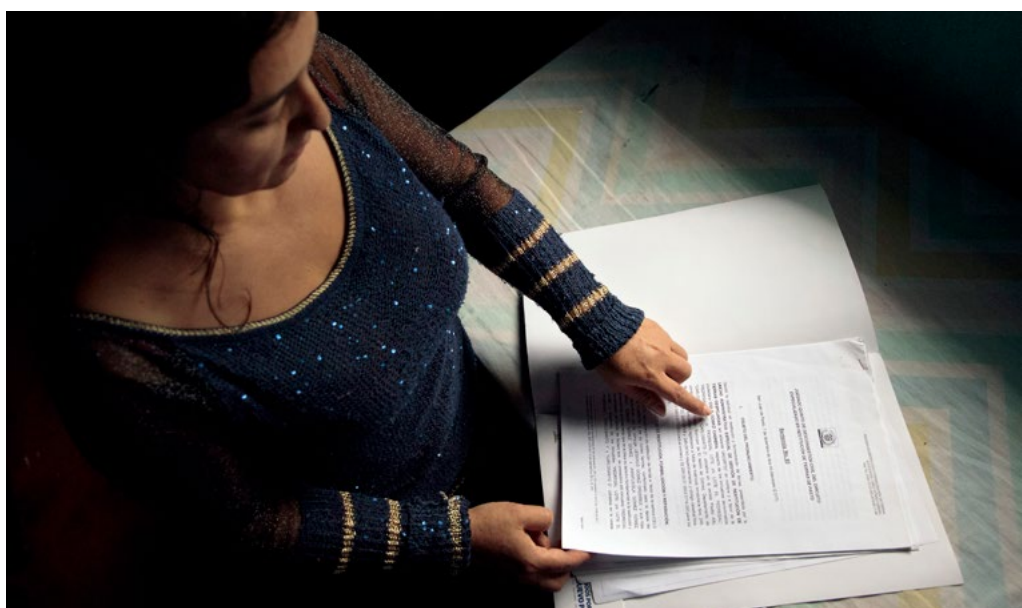
About the Project

Under the transitional justice framework, Colombia has embarked on addressing the severe impacts of armed conflict on property and land ownership. The enactment of Law 1448 in 2011, known as The Victims and Land Restitution Law, aimed to rectify these long-standing injustices and human rights violations, setting a foundation for the peace agreement with the FARC in 2016.

This research delves into the implementation and effects of land restitution within this framework, combining fieldwork and quantitative analysis to understand the experiences of dispossessed victims. It highlights the critical influence of informal institutions on transitional justice efforts, offering insights for both local and international audiences on the complexities of restoring rights in the aftermath of conflict.

Key Findings

- **The land restitution process is slow and there are high application rejection rates by the Land Restitution Unit (URT).** After a decade, only about 20.6% of applications have been presented to a judge, and a fraction of the dispossessed land has been returned. Moreover, only 170,042 hectares had been restituted, out of the millions of hectares of dispossessed or abandoned land resulting from forced displacement.

- **Many rejection decisions are based on erroneous interpretations of complex legal concepts.** In many cases, the URT has not followed the precedent or jurisprudence established by the Constitutional Court or by the special land restitution jurisdiction.

- **Design flaws in the land restitution policy have resulted in its marginal impact.** The process is divided into an administrative and a judicial step. The administrative step under the URT has become an insurmountable barrier for many victims due to faulty implementation and opaque processes with little public information or records for the stated reasons for rejecting claims.

- **The process of application withdrawals is widespread, despite this not being permitted.** Around 20% of land restitution application rejections are due to a concept called "withdrawal," either initiated by the applicant or assumed by the URT for lack of response. Despite the Constitutional Court's ban of this practice, it remains common, with unclear distinctions between intentional and tacit withdrawals.

- **Land ownership records in Colombia are often missing, lost, or destroyed due to conflict or corruption, complicating restitution.** There are also many cases where people were forced to sell their land. Landowners would be threatened, then offered very little money for the land whilst a team of lawyers would 'legalise' these corrupt transactions.

- **Individual institutions and mechanisms are influential in the success of the peace agreement, not just the government.** Contrary to the prevalent view that Colombia's peace agreement is overly reliant on the President's will, this research uncovers a more complex reality. It shows that certain institutions involved in the transitional process have gained significant autonomy and influence, operating independently of executive decisions. This complexity suggests the need for a more nuanced

> "
> The land restitution policy promises victims restitution of their lands, a policy designed to deal with the atrocious effects of the forced displacement of more than 15% of the population during the armed conflict, as well as with the historic concentration of land in the hands of the elite. "
>
> DR NELSON CAMILO SANCHEZ

understanding of the peace process, recognising the diverse centres of power involved.

- **The data gathered did not show a great disparity between male and female claimants to land.** Across both the data gathered on the performance of institutions, and the qualitative work done with victims, public servants and experts, there was no substantial difference between how men and women experienced their journey through the restitution process. Importantly, this research found that women are not disproportionally negatively affected by the system.

- **Attention to gender in the peace agreement may have contributed to a near gendered balance in claimants.** The number of claimants that are men and women are almost 50/50 (55% women, 45% men). Part of the explanation for this is that many of the mechanisms that have been designed incorporated a gender lens. For example, once a victim of dispossession has been identified, the system takes into account the household. So, even if previously the land title was in the man's name, the law provides that the land will be restituted in both the man's and woman's names.

- **Mechanisms to address land rights issues post conflict operate under liberal notions of property land rights that are not fit for purpose.** The absence of official land records compromises the efficacy of land restitution mechanisms rooted in the liberal property rights model, exemplified by the UN's Pinheiro Principles. This model, emphasising individual ownership and the necessity of written records, proves inadequate, highlighting the potential advantages of alternative communal property frameworks.

- **Vast inequalities mean that many who do recover their land are then forced to sell due to economic necessity.** Some people who can recover their land are unable to use it to provide a livelihood. They are forced to re-sell their land because they are unable to compete with the large agricultural businesses, which undermines the land restitution process.

- **Bureaucratic mechanisms in the Colombia context cannot be treated as homogenous and resistant to the programme.** There is an assumption that bureaucracies are preventing progress, but this is not always the case. In Colombia, many of the bureaucrats working to create human rights and transitional justice policies are centring victims' rights.

Total Number of Applications Per Semester Versus Denials and Inclusions Per Semester

Legend:
- Total number of applications
- Number of denied applications
- Number of included applications

RESTITUCIÓN DE TIERRAS
Un desafío vigente
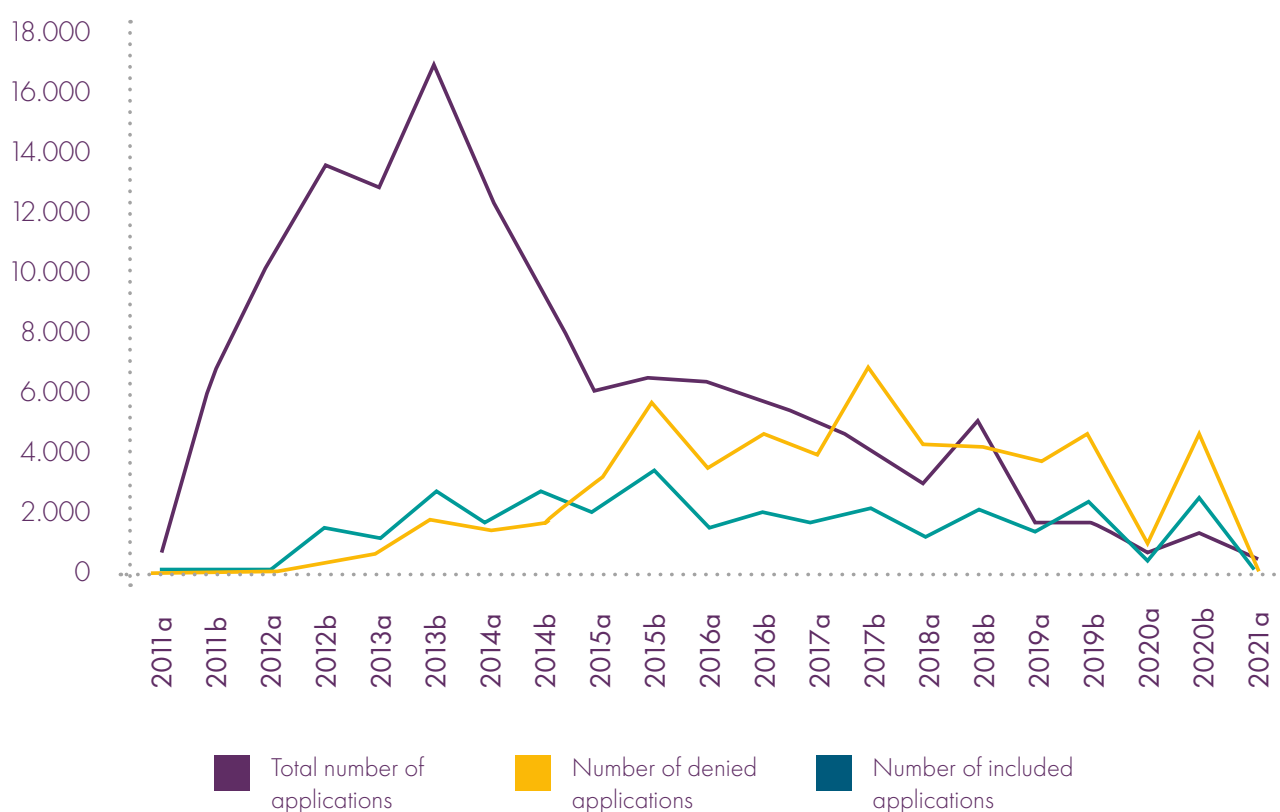
Video

¿Barreras insuperables?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0DXrjaAC104

Recommendations

Policymakers and the Land Restitution Unit (URT)

- **Far-reaching reforms are needed in the land restitution policy to effectively secure victims' rights and achieve its intended transformative effects.** Specifically, the URT needs to revise its policies and framework to adopt a victim-centred approach in land restitution, favouring victims in any uncertain situations. It should also cease the practice of withdrawing applications, in compliance with the Constitutional Court's decision.

- **Greater access to information and transparency in land restitution processes and outcomes.** Despite stipulations that information should be open source, accessible and transparent, in practice the decision-making process and outcomes when it comes to land restitution are not available. This access to information is important to ensure the process and its progress have external oversight.

- **A thorough examination of rejected applications is necessary to identify any violations of victims' rights, with immediate corrective measures required where breaches are detected.** In the case of application rejections constituting violations of victims' rights, the URT should expeditiously revoke the denials and include such applications in the Land Registry. Also, the URT should take appropriate measures to combat the adverse effects suffered by applicants due to the rejection of the applications.

- **Review and update the management and hiring processes for staff handling land restitution cases to align them with the unique reparative nature of their work.** Current hiring regulations, not designed for such specialised institutions, need revision to procure and retain staff effectively. Additionally, implement policies that encourage reaching out to victims, rather than rewarding staff based on the quantity of cases closed, to ensure complex cases are not ignored.

- **Review the policy for keeping contact with victims that come forward to claim land.** There are too many cases where a case has been closed because a victim who has come forward has then become unreachable. Adequate contact mechanisms and documentation should be put in place that account for the realities of internally displaced persons who are often forced to move frequently and change their contact numbers as they do not have adequate economic means to maintain phone contracts.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/land-reform-peace-and-informal-institutions/

PROJECT PROFILE

5.5 When Women Do Not Own Land:
Land Ownership and Women's Empowerment in Sri Lanka

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Photo Credit: Lou Lou B on Unsplash

About the Project

This project seeks to generate evidence-based research on the relationship between land security and women's empowerment with a view to influencing policy, practice and public awareness in post-war Sri Lanka. There has not been a detailed study of how access to land can enhance women's empowerment since the war ended in 2009. This study was the first of its kind in post-war Sri Lanka. The evidence will be used to influence policy, practice and public awareness of women's empowerment,

locally and globally. As the project developed, additional components have been added to respond to the changing political context. A documentary film, 'Anatomy of a Protest', explores the social protest movement that erupted spontaneously in 2022 in the wake of an unprecedented economic crisis. An article on 'War Memories' was developed, and a second documentary and article on 'Contested Religious Spaces' are in development.

The primary objective of the study is to explore the associations between land

ownership and women's empowerment in Sri Lanka. A mixed methods approach is used for data collection and analysis. The quantitative survey collected primary data from a random sample of 2000 households in Jaffna and Kandy districts. The qualitative research component conducted involved 103 in-depth interviews in four districts – Batticaloa, Jaffna, Kandy, Matara. The districts for the study have been selected purposively to provide insights into the customary laws in place in Sri Lanka..

Key Findings

- **Land ownership does not seem to influence women's labour force participation.** Most women recognise land as an asset that can generate income. Yet, women who own residential property are less likely to be economically active. Moreover, only a few women own agricultural land and even fewer women own land that can be used for non-agricultural economic activities. Agency on land use is more apparent for women in home gardening relative to large-scale cultivation. Even if the land is owned by the women, the men predominantly make decisions related to land use.

- **Legal title to land seems to encourage women's full involvement in household decisions related to land.** Holding a legal title seems to have a positive effect on women's full involvement in land-related decisions. Joint titles particularly seem to make it more likely that women are included in decisions to sell, rent or pass on land to inheritors. However, women are relatively less likely to be included in decisions about pledging land as collateral, and even in decisions related to renting and renovating.

- **Land appears to be more of a status symbol than an economic resource for women.** Land ownership has a positive effect on women mainly through its social value than its value as an economic resource. Many women are also of the opinion that it is difficult to tackle land-related complications without the help of men in addressing this social issue.

- **The type of land women own might play a role in the economic benefits that accrue to them from land ownership.** For some women, residential property might strengthen their bargaining power within the household. Furthermore, productive land ownership could catalyse their participation in economic activities.

- **Land ownership is a necessary but insufficient condition for women's empowerment and social wellbeing in Sri Lanka.** Even if women's land ownership is strengthened, land ownership alone cannot help women transform power relations and overcome gender disparities to achieve agency, empowerment and social wellbeing. In addition to land ownership, knowledge and awareness on how to use this right to one's advantage as bargaining power within the family and community is also needed.

Recommendations

Sri Lankan Government, Development Agencies and Ngos

- **Increase the use of more equitable land ownership arrangements.** Development interventions that involve providing new houses and land (in situations of relocation or resettlement) should focus on encouraging joint titling for potential beneficiaries.

- **There should be a focused discussion on what is required in terms of ensuring land ownership and control of land for women.** Such a consultative process could help identify and strengthen existing laws that are not gender discriminatory and remove certain discriminatory clauses introduced during the colonial period. Further, political interventions in land reform and resettlement processes need to be constrained to ensure that existing laws are fully implemented.

- **The government must improve the economic utility of land to women.** It must also implement a gender sensitive approach across the institutional environment and address barriers to empower women to use land as an economic resource without having to rely too much on male support.

- **Education on one's land rights and awareness of land utilisation must be strengthened.** Women's agency is predominantly seen in home-gardening-related land use, mostly for own consumption, while men have more control over agricultural land use for the market. Therefore, more capacity building for women, raising awareness on agricultural land utilisation, education on women's rights and bargaining power within the household and society need to be adequately provided for land ownership to be truly beneficial to women.

Financial Intermediaries, Especially Banks

- **Formal financial systems must recognise and include women in credit disbursement processes, especially those involving land as collateral.** Revision of their procedures to consider joint consultations with the borrower and their spouse, or the principal female relative, during the loan processing period might be an effective way to promote the inclusion of women in decisions to pledge land as collateral for loans.

Research Organisations and Think Tanks

- **More research and collaborations with women on the ground are required to understand how land ownership can strengthen different aspects of women's empowerment and wellbeing.** A strong context-specific and nuanced understanding of the realities under which women have the potential for agency is necessary to inform and strengthen policies and institutions in relation to land rights.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/when-women-do-not-own-land-land-ownership-and-womens-empowerment-in-sri-lanka/

COLLECTIVE OUTPUT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Land and Political Economy

Dr Josephine Ahikire; Stephen Oola; Mario Gomez; Dr Nelson Camilo Sanchez Leon; Dr Simeon Koroma; Dr Mohamed Sesay

The Land and Political Economy Collective Output Project included Hub Members from four separate research projects working together and was inspired by the Livelihood, Land and Rights stream in the Hub (See Chapter Six for a detailed explanation of the research stream and each of its project profiles). This collective work and research stream emerged out of the realisation that "post-conflict" countries are often characterised by other forms of violence and conflict, particularly violations of economic and social rights, which post-conflict justice has failed to address sufficiently. The projects were motivated by renewed assertions of the indivisibility of rights, which challenge the traditional division of civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights. Therefore, research project under the stream sought to address the following gaps in gender justice and security: property rights beyond transitional justice; land rights and gender justice; and justice beyond the formal legal system.

Focusing on experiences in Colombia, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone and Ugada, the following projects were implemented under this stream and discussed in this collective output project:

1. **Land reform, peace, and informal institutions in rural Colombia**, led by Camilo Sanchez (DeJusticia, Colombia)

2. **When women do not own land: Land ownership and women's empowerment in Sri Lanka**, led by Mario Gomez (International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Sri Lanka)

3. **Land rights, gender justice, and legal pluralism in Sierra Leone**, led by Mohamed Sesay (York University, Canada) and Simeon Koroma (Timap for Justice, Sierra Leone)

4. **Beyond war Compensation: Gender and the challenge of social economic and cultural rights in post-conflict Northern Uganda**, led by Josephine Ahikire (Makerere University) and Stephen Oola (Amani Institute Uganda)

While the research projects were single case studies in Colombia, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, and Uganda, a number of overlapping issues across the cases were investigated. Some projects explored the relationship between land ownership, power relations, and gender disparities in agency, empowerment, and wellbeing. With

specific attention to experiences of disadvantaged communities such as landless women and war-affected populations, these property relations were interrogated beyond the formal institutional settings to account for experiences in the informal sector, customary systems, and indigenous communities. Some devoted attention to the impact of global capital on the struggles for land rights and social justice within the context of neoliberal development, recognising both the structural constraints and agency of marginalised communities. Others examined contestation over heritage and religious sites in post-war societies, including the struggles to build inclusive peace. Each project considered the broader political, sociolegal, and economic contexts in which contestations over land and property rights play out, including the global capitalist economy, regime type, legal pluralism, and underdevelopment. Many also took a historical perspective that situates struggles of social, economic, and cultural rights within a broader history of colonialism, state formation, and deep-rooted patriarchal structures. All projects adopted interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approaches to analyse the issues from political economy, legal, cultural, sociological, and gender perspectives.

The Land and Political Economy Project provided a space for Hub Members from multiple projects in the research stream to discuss key issues around land, political economy, gender justice, and inclusive peace. During project workshops held at Hub Conventions the group engaged in dialogue about various issues including gender and access to land/land justice; different land tenure systems and customary and indigenous land issues; local economies and global capitalism and commercial interests in land. These sessions supported collaboration across Hub projects and informed the overall work of the Livelihoods, Land and Rights stream as well as Hub Members' research projects.

Policy relevance and impact were built into the activities and outputs of the stream, from the project conceptualisation to processes of implementation. Active participants and project leaders included local practitioners and communities, who helped to co-design research, co-author outputs, and disseminate outputs widely. This ensured buy-in and contributions by practitioners from the outset and throughout project implementation. The outputs were disseminated via workshops, the hub website, and through policy briefs, opinion pieces and academic articles, to scholars and practitioners.
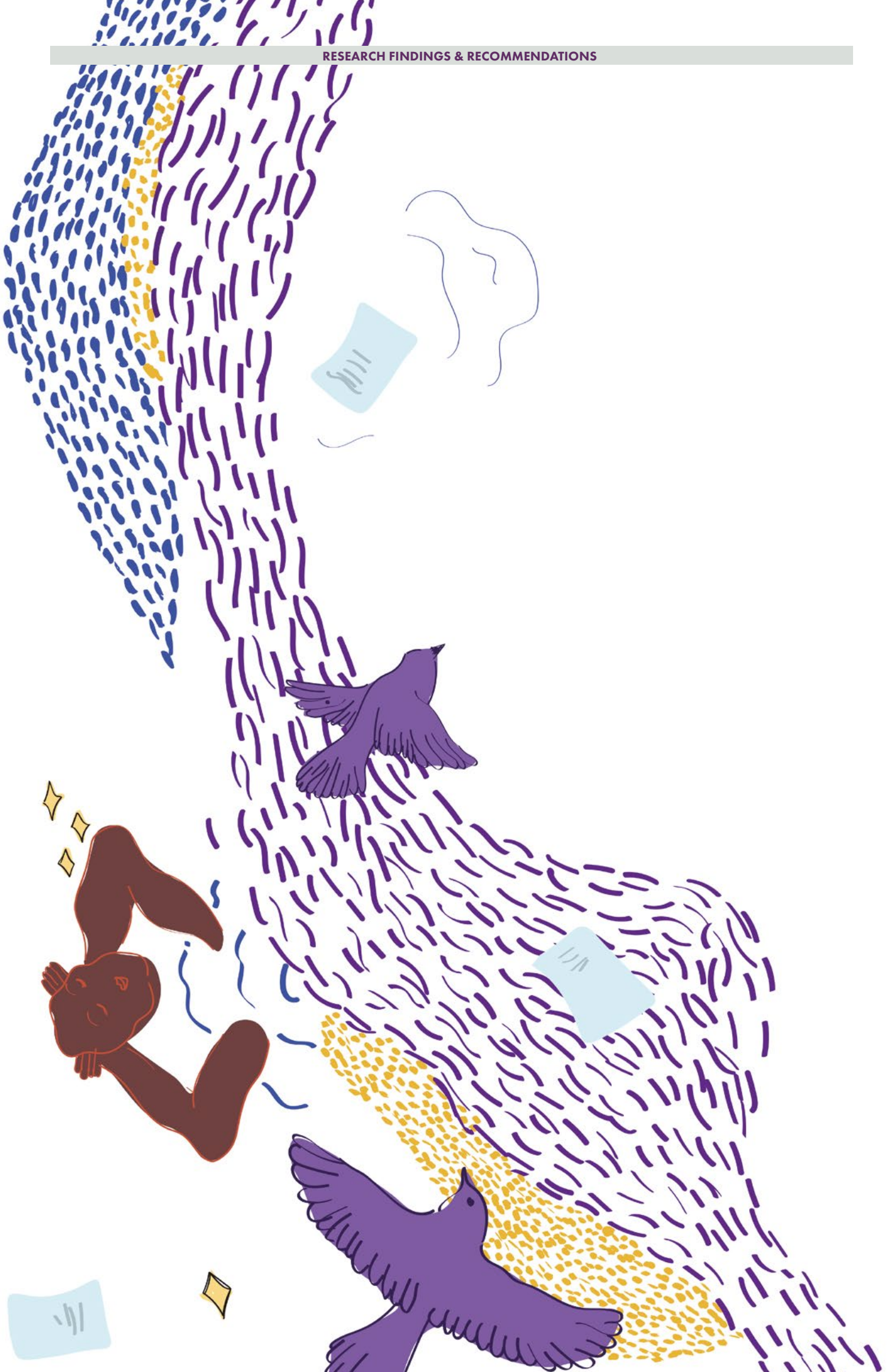
Masculinities and Sexualities

This chapter focuses on the theme **Masculinities and Sexualities** across the Hub's research. The chapter starts with a summary of the theme, followed by detailed findings and recommendations from each of the six Hub projects researching this area.

6.1 Masculinities and Sexualities

Hub Co-Directors

Dr Choman Hardi, American University of Iraq Sulaimani

Dr Paul Kirby, Queen Mary University of London
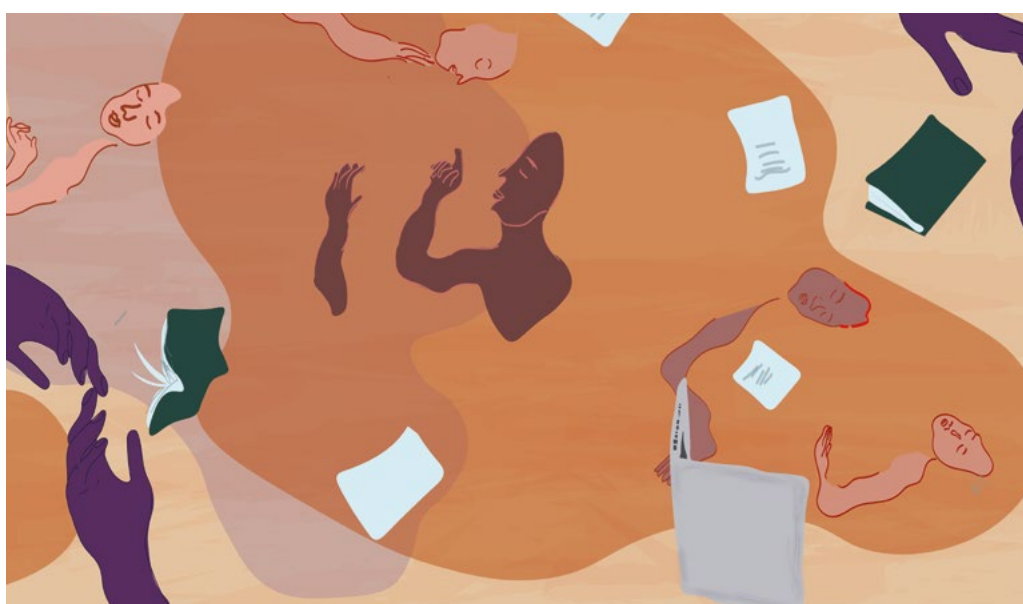
The Masculinities and Sexualities (M&S) stream within the Gender, Justice and Security Hub examines different perspectives on the constructions of masculinity, sexuality and violence, exploring their intricate dynamics and the ways they evolve and are influenced by conflict across regions of the world. In essence, the M&S research stream functions at the intersection of academic inquiry and tangible real-world impact, aiming to produce and share new knowledge, and create or influence relevant polices that contribute to egalitarian practices and a transformed future. The geographical scope of the research includes regions such as Syria, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Uganda, Lebanon, Bosnia, Sierra Leone and South Sudan.

The research in this stream is directed toward advancing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality, SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

Comparative analysis of the Masculinity and Sexuality projects offers the following Key Findings and recommendations:

- **Reflection Through Dialogue and Focus Group Discussions:** Fostering community dialogue and focus group discussions is very important in promoting reflection, critical thinking, and evaluation of the social dynamics of violence and gender related issues.

- **Community Ownership:** It is important that solutions are developed within the community rather than external contexts. More community level conversations, led by local leaders, religious leaders, educators and activists, are needed on social norms and gender-based issues, as well as working towards producing community led responses and solutions.

- **Empowerment Through Creative Expressions:** Using diverse creative methods, like poetry writings workshops and photo text activities, have proven effective in encouraging self-expression, challenging stereotypes and aiding in reflection on social issues.

- **Capacity Building and Policy Change vs Unwillingness to Change:** Collaboration with key government ministers for capacity building and policy recommendation are effective ways of influencing systemic change and promoting gender sensitivity. However, it remains crucial to acknowledge the overwhelming reluctance within many government agencies to accept and embrace change or adopt new approaches, often due to regulatory constraints and societal pressures. Another important issue is the gap between policy and practice and how some institutions take theoretical steps towards change but undermine implementation.

- **Interdisciplinary Approach:** Examining social issues, such as gender and violence, through a multidisciplinary lens is crucial as it provides more accurate and dynamic insights into the root causes of these deep problems. Additionally, fostering collaboration across disciplines serves to enrich perspectives and enhance the overall impact of each project while making sure duplicate efforts are eliminated.

- **Coordinated Responses:** Achieving gender equality is not the responsibility of NGOs and activists alone, and it will not be possible without the engagement of the larger community. An effective approach requires coordinated responses from the government, the NGO sector, funders and donors, the media, and the broader community.

- **Impact of COVID-19:** The COVID-19 pandemic has seriously influenced the progress and outputs of the projects by limiting the scope of activities and the need to adopt alternate tasks that can be done remotely. It has also increased gender-based violence against people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

6.2 Changing SOGIE in Conflict, Peace and Displacement in the MENA Region

Hub Members

Helena Berchtold, MOSAIC

Caroline Chayya, MOSAIC

Dr Charbel Maydaa, MOSAIC

Dr Henri Myrttinen, MOSAIC

About the Project

Persons of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) face heightened levels of discrimination and violence in conflict and crisis-affected contexts. This important area of research and policymaking remains underexamined, particularly as it relates to the Syrian Civil War.

In response, this project examines the impact of the Syrian War and attendant displacement on diverse SOGIE individuals and communities in Lebanon, Turkey, and Syria. Furthermore, this research looks at how the compounding impacts of war and displacement have been exacerbated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic crises, the Beirut port explosion and the increased gender backlash in all three countries.

Through a combination of desk research, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions in all three countries, this project aims to examine the cumulative direct and indirect impacts of conflict, displacement and other crises on individuals of diverse SOGIESC in these contexts. In doing so, the project highlights the experiences and voices of these individuals including their diverse needs, access to resources and support, as well as the ways different aspects of their intersectional identities impact their lives in times of conflict and crisis.

Key Findings

- **Appearance and visibility matter.** Individuals in all three contexts consistently report the importance of appearance and visibility in relation to their SOGIESC, emphasising societal expectations of 'accepted' gender presentations. Trans women in particular are highlighted as being exceptionally vulnerable due to visible gender norm transgressions.

- **Constant harassment from state authorities pervades all three countries.** In Lebanon, in particular, the political attacks are now much more visible and there is state harassment of organisations working on and providing services to the LGBTIQ+ community. There is increased support for the introduction of a bill that would criminalise supporters of all NGOs that promote LGBTIQ+ rights. Furthermore, vulnerable communities are being targeted to divert attention away from politics, and feminist groups are being silenced.

- **Daily fears force persons with diverse SOGIESC into concealment.** In Syria, respondents depict a clandestine diverse SOGIESC community life filled with daily challenges, including the fear of conscription into the Syrian army and harassment at checkpoints. They often adjust their behaviour to conceal their identity, with some even resorting to outward displays of religiosity for protection.

- **Economic struggles and job discrimination are common and exacerbated by the pandemic and ongoing economic crises.** Economic struggles, particularly for refugees and those visibly non-conforming, were prevalent in all three countries. Specifically, many individuals face various forms of job discrimination. In Lebanon, the economic crisis has pushed many persons of diverse SOGIESC further into the margins of the economy, and COVID-19 prevention measures have hit them hard, including those dependent on sex work for survival.

> **"**
> Individuals consistently reported the importance of appearance and visibility in relation to their SOGIESC, emphasising societal expectations of 'accepted' gender presentations. **"**
>
> DR CHARBEL MAYDAA

> **"**
> Much of the research on the gendered impacts of the Syrian Civil War has largely focused on gendered needs assessments conducted by NGOs as well as on women, without taking women's diverse SOGIESC into account. **"**
>
> DR CHARBEL MAYDAA

- **Everyday threats in the context of conflict.** Respondents in all three contexts place less significant emphasis on war experiences in their narratives. Instead, threats from civilians, including family, are more prominent.

- **Family dynamics for individuals with diverse SOGIESC are complex.** While some found acceptance, many reported threats or violence from family members. There are also instances of forced marriage and 'corrective' rape.

- **Psychosocial support is sparse in Lebanon, Turkey, and Syria.** Persons with diverse SOGIESC have limited access to either acute or long-term psychosocial support, although the situation in Lebanon is better than in Turkey and Syria. However, there are increasing rates of suicide in the Syrian diaspora in Lebanon as well as Turkey.

- **External violence and discrimination combine with pressures from within.** In Lebanon and Turkey, internalised fear and homophobia are surprisingly present, even within the LGBTIQ+ community. Some individuals confess they would ostracise their own children if they identified as LGBTIQ+.

- **The desire to leave is strong in all three nations.** The cumulative impacts of discrimination, violence, and mental health issues resulted in a desire for individuals to consider leaving the Middle East region.

- **Micro-geographies shape lived experiences.** All respondents emphasise the need to be knowledgeable about "micro-geographies" of safety in their cities, understanding where and when they can be more open about their gender identity.

Additional Findings Focused on Lebanon

- **Transnational activism between Lebanon, Egypt, and Sudan provides key support.** Activists and organisations in Lebanon are adapting their strategies and learning from organisations in Egypt and Sudan. Meeting with activists and organisations from these contexts, they learn from their tactics of continued organisation under repressive regimes.

- **There is a lack of integration of displaced Syrians.** Programmes lack culturally sensitive approaches and service providers trained in refugee contexts.

- **There are high levels of gender discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons, especially undocumented Syrian refugees.** The conditions that they find in Lebanon are perceived as far better than those they fled from in Syria. However, Lebanon is not the country of freedom and tolerance in relation to LGBTIQ+ rights that they were looking for. Lebanon is often considered as just a stop along their migration journey.

- **Lebanon's triple crisis compounds discrimination against persons of diverse SOGIESC.** The triple crisis has compounded the ostracisation, harassment and discrimination of persons of diverse SOGIESC, who have experienced misogynistic, lesbophobic, homophobic, transphobic, or xenophobic behaviour. The economic crisis has pushed many persons of diverse SOGIESC further into the margins of the economy, and COVID-19 prevention measures have hit hard, especially people dependent on sex work for survival. The increasing socio-economic strain is also connected to increased anti-refugee and anti-diverse SOGIESC sentiments.

> **"**
> 96% faced threats in Syria due to their SOGIESC, over half reported sexual abuse, and a significant number experienced physical assault in Lebanon. **"**
>
> HEARTLAND ALLIANCE STUDY, 2014

> **"**
> I want to love and be loved like a normal person, not spend all my life like a murderous criminal who's waiting for the people to hang him. **"**
>
> FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION PARTICIPANT, ALEPPO, SYRIA

Recommendations

Lebanese, Syrian, and Turkish Policymakers and NGOs

- Recognise diversity and use an intersectional approach. Both NGOs and policymakers should recognise that people of diverse SOGIESC are not the same across different locations and across the gender spectrum. Location is a key determinant of (in)security, and factors such as class, social capital, and age have different impacts and should be accounted for.

- More sustainable core funding is needed to support people of diverse SOGIESC. Specifically, more funding is needed for service provisions and psychological support and care.

International NGOs

- Move beyond simplistic and homogenised understandings of LGBTIQ+ needs. Have an inclusive and holistic approach when it comes to humanitarian response, taking into consideration LGBTIQ+ needs.

Government of Lebanon

- Legal reform is urgently needed. Abolish article 534 in the penal code, which criminalises homosexual acts, and abolish all laws that criminalise sex workers.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit: https://thegenderhub.com/stories/changing-sogie-in-conflict-peace-and-displacement-in-the-mena/

6.3 Cross-Border Wars, Sexuality and Citizenship

Hub Members

Dr Grace Akello, Gulu University

About the Project

Uganda's soldiers are frequently deployed across national borders to provide security assistance in war-affected countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan, the Central Africa Republic and Somalia. In addition, Uganda's soldiers are also often engaged in internal missions, usually working on short notice, and being sent to various regions experiencing security threats. Although soldiers are deployed with an understanding that the assignment will only take a few weeks to complete, generally these engagements are protracted in nature.

This project conducted 28 months of ethnographic research with soldiers, cross-border war-women and soldiers' families to better understand their physical, sexual, and mental health experiences as well as changes in their familial and social relations. It aims to develop gender-sensitive amendments in military institutional frameworks and policy guidelines for building stronger security institutions that address and respond to the soldiers' conduct on deployment and that meet the gendered needs and rights of the women and children with whom they form temporary relations. In doing so, this project also develops a 'soldier life event scale' measuring key life incidents and measuring everyday stressors in soldier's lives and the people associated with them.

Key Findings

- **Military deployments are often protracted with high casualty rates.** Despite this, soldiers are often sent on multiple long-term deployments. Although military deployments within and across national borders are often conceived as short-term missions aimed at improving the security situation in weeks, in the recent past, most missions have been protracted, resulted in high casualty rates and have often taken years to complete. The Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF) deployment to the DRC is one prime example. The mission, though only planned for a few weeks, ended up lasting three years from 2000 – 2003.

- **Frequent deployments are being driven by neoliberal incentives.** In most of the conflicts that soldiers are deployed to, Uganda has no specific interests – these are conflicts outside of Uganda's borders that are being fought for neoliberal incentives where war and money are intertwined. This also extends to the soldiers' motives who volunteer for deployment – which might be based on financial reward and not because they believe in restoring peace and normalcy.

- **Soldiers engage in relationships and create families whilst on deployment, in what they term 'temporary families'.** Many male soldiers form consensual social relationships with women on deployment. They see these relationships as temporary and therefore often do not make plans to deal with the long-term outcomes, including when they have children with the cross-border 'war-women'. In response, some women feel compelled to leave their country and move to Uganda to join their spouses when the soldiers return to Uganda.

> **"**
> War-women must be viewed as people enmeshed in complex social unions and though entangled in them with soldiers, soldiers are not able to mitigate or manage them, in part due to institutional barriers and financial constraints. **"**
>
> DR GRACE AKELLO

- **Repatriation policies have left a population of war-women and deployed soldiers in Uganda who are gazetted and do not qualify for state support.** Starting in 2000, all military were repatriated back to Uganda with the families they formed during deployment. The UPDF has repatriated about 400 women and children from the DRC alone. The state allows the families entry, and they are settled in various refugee camps, but they do not qualify for further state support. While many of the children know their fathers are *afande* (a soldier), and know their title and rank within the military, this is still not deemed sufficient evidence for them to receive support as an additional family member.

- **Hundreds of children have been born as a result of these short-term relationships leading to an increase in *aguu* (street children).** Many war-women with older children relocate from the gazetted villages to urban and peri-urban centres to access jobs. Some war-women prefer to live in the barracks. However, because soldiers are deployed frequently, spouses of deployed soldiers are sent out of the barracks. Such women and children then become homeless. These changes can cause tensions within local labour markets and conflicts with other civilians in those communities.

- **War-women and their children are stigmatised and live at the social, economic and political margins in Uganda.** War-women and their children are frequently undocumented, 'unclaimed' and framed as posing short-term and long-term challenges to other local civilians, the Ugandan state and soldiers alike. Many soldiers discuss their attempts to introduce their new families to their relatives. However, this rarely succeeds due to a shortage of land or co-wives who do not accept the new family members. Furthermore, sometimes soldiers are unwilling to support children born in this context.

- **The Ugandan state is struggling to financially support women and their families living in these challenging circumstances.** Although the state originally subsidised the living costs of thousands of cross-border war-women and their children, Uganda is no longer able to support and to sustain the ever-increasing war-related populations. This is due to budget cuts for the defence ministry and broader national economic struggles.

Recommendations

Ugandan Peoples' Defence Force (UPDF)

- **Restructure military deployments and financial incentives for soldiers to shift to redistributive ways of peacebuilding.** Uganda has predominantly relied on a militaristic approach of resolving internal and external wars, which is supplemented and supported by the UN structures and international approaches to security. This approach is no longer sustainable, and more emphasis should be placed on peaceful means of conflict resolution with fewer missions, limiting military expenditure on the purchasing of arms, and greater emphasis on mediation.

- **Frequent and multiple soldier deployments must be minimised to mitigate the complex social and economic emergencies that come from soldiers starting 'temporary' families whilst on deployment.** For soldiers, minimising the frequency and length of missions will discourage them from forming multiple social relations. Further, shorter military deployments will positively impact soldiers' overall physical and mental well-being.

> **"**
> We were a bridge... A bridge for ideas, how to communicate viewpoints from the vulnerable to the privileged and then relay back or suggest how to improve their situation. **"**
>
> DR GRACE AKELLO

Ugandan Government

- **Provide citizenship for cross-border war-women and their children.** Cross-border war-women and children need to be treated with dignity and as citizens, whether it means acquiring citizenship through their links with the military or as people enmeshed in wars created and perpetuated by the state.

- **Improving access to contraception and family planning services.** Cross-border war women living in complex emergencies do not have knowledge of and access to family planning services. These resources and support need to be made more accessible to this specific population.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/cross-border-wars-sexuality-and-citizenship/

6.4 Men, Peace and Security

Hub Members

Dr Chloé Lewis, Queen Mary University of London

Dr Paul Kirby, Queen Mary University of London

Photo Credit: Nicky Armstrong

About the Project

This project investigates contemporary development, humanitarian and security efforts to change men and masculinities. There is a growing attention to men as the "other side" of gender justice efforts, whether as perpetrators, allies and agents of change, or survivors of violence themselves. Initiatives in national militaries, development programmes, civil society campaigns, humanitarian crisis responses and public health ministries seek to reform or abolish certain forms of masculinity and harmful masculine behaviour in favour of other values and identities – sometimes described as positive masculinity.

While attention from practitioners, policymakers, activists and scholars alike has grown in this area, more research is needed to critically examine these efforts and men's numerous and sometimes overlapping roles in peace and security contexts. This is needed to understand both how these initiatives work, and the theoretical and practical problems that arise in the effort to govern masculinity. Through participant observation, interviews and discourse analysis, this project engages with key organisations, practitioners and activists working with men towards gender justice.

Key Findings

- **Efforts to engage boys and men as allies in gender justice are increasing and diversifying.** Violence prevention programmes and interventions that seek to promote men's involvement in gender equality and prevent violence against women and girls continue to expand in conflict and security contexts globally. Within this growing field of 'engaging men' a diversity of approaches is being employed including those that focus on challenging and changing gendered social norms about masculinity; faith-based approaches; and programmes that use a trauma-informed lens to engage men as both potential allies and as victims-survivors.

- **Changing individual men and ideas of masculinity is important – but gender justice first and foremost requires addressing patriarchy and structural conditions.** There is a risk that too much attention is being paid to micro changes in transforming individual men and masculinities and not enough on structural level changes. Overarching structural forms of violence and inequality, as well as institutional mandates and operational constraints, hamper efforts to engage men.

- **Understanding the intersections between masculinity and conflict requires examining men as potential victim-survivors in conflict too.** While most violence in conflict contexts is committed by men, men are victims and survivors too. Engaging men as potential victim-survivors challenges gender binaries on who can be a 'victim-survivor,' which continue to frame many interventions. Doing so means that formats for engagement are cognisant of their experience and can provide a trauma-informed engagement approach.

- **There is increased attention to the experiences and needs of LGBTIQ+ populations in conflicts, including those who identify as men and those who are the victims or survivors of violence.** Increased focus on LGBTIQ+ populations is a needed and important development. However, work that focusses on men as victims of violence is often linked or subsumed within LGBTIQ+ work. While there can be overlaps between these two groups, always conflating them is problematic and warrants more critical engagement.

- **Male survivors of violence often have less access to support services.** Research in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) showed many men who experience sexual violence did not have access to support services or trauma-informed care – a trend also seen in other conflict

> **"**
> I think there are important ethical and practical reasons as to why we need women's centered approaches and spaces. It just means that men, male survivors, have a more restricted range of support services. **"**
>
> DR CHLOÉ LEWIS

settings. This care gap can leave men feeling silenced or marginalised and without support that this centred on male survivors and their differing needs.

- **Viewing men as perpetrators of violence remains the dominant lens through which men and masculinities in conflict and security spaces are understood.** In particular, programmes and research focus on militarised masculinities and armed men in uniform. While these are important, critical examinations of men's violence in conflict requires attention to both militarised masculinities and the underlying structural conditions and policies that support the mobilisation of men.

Photo Credit: Josep Martins on Unsplash

Recommendations

Researchers and Academia

- **A critical masculinities lens is needed in peace and security work**. Those working in conflict-affected contexts need to be attentive to the role of masculinities, men's diverse experiences and needs, and engaging with the challenges and tensions in doing this work through a feminist approach.

- **There is a need for more collaboration across gender-based research and programming**. Masculinities in conflict work is too often done in parallel with broader gender justice, women, and LGBTIQ+-focused work. Although, there are valid critiques about work on masculinities, including that it takes away resources and attention from work focused on women, these challenges need to be addressed robustly and collaboratively, and more convergences across the different areas of gender research is needed.

Development INGOs/NGOs

- **Programme development in response to conflict related sexual violence should avoid homogenising experiences of sexual violence**. The experiences and support needs of male survivors-victims differs from the needs of LGBTIQ+ folks and women. Whilst we push for context specific approaches to and understandings of sexual violence when looking at female victim-survivor programmes, this should be further extended to specific programmes framed around male victim-survivors.

- **Doing masculinities work can be personally traumatic and challenging.** In particular, women and people of all genders who have experienced men's violence may find doing work with men, masculinities, and conflict personally challenging. This work requires a feminist ethic of care as well as trauma-informed approaches and support.

> "
> Getting to a more peaceful, gender equal, equitable world – I think more bridges need to be built, and there needs to be more willingness and openness to explore work with men and masculinities in a more open and potentially empathetic way, particularly in conflict settings and contexts. "
>
> DR CHLOÉ LEWIS

- **Multiple approaches to accountability for male perpetrated violence and justice are needed in conflict contexts – including ones that use trauma-informed approaches.** Many of the responses to men's sexual violence in conflict-affected contexts are judicial and corporal. This is needed and important. But judicial systems in conflict-affected contexts can be depleted, dangerous, and ineffective. More alternative, gender sensitive, context-specific and adaptable approaches to working with conflict-affected men, including through disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes that are trauma-informed, are needed.

Photo Credit: Josep Martins on Unsplash

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/men-peace-and-security/

PROJECT PROFILE

6.5 Sex, Love and War

Hub Members

Dr Holly Porter, University of Cambridge

About the Project

This project examines the relationship between war, displacement, sexualities and intimate gendered relationships. It does so with the aim of improving knowledge and increasing public debate about sexualities and evolving gender norms in conflict-affected contexts.

Specifically, this project examines Northern Uganda, the Acholi people and the impact of 20 years of war between the Ugandan Government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Over 90% of the population in this region experienced displacement during this time. Alienation from the land, combined with the impacts of ongoing violence caused massive, gendered disruptions to daily life including within intimate relationships and families.

One observation that prompts this research concerns the claim that there were no marriages taking place in the displacement camps. However, if no marriage was occurring for 20 years in a society where almost everything revolved around kinship – how do you then get access to land; how do you resolve conflicts; what rituals do you do if there is misfortune and suffering; how does governance and decision-making take place? What do you do if all these things revolve around belonging to a particular kind of kinship group/lineage?

Project Approach

This project uses long-term ethnography, including participant observation, a random sample of interviews of nearly 200 women, and over 200 "love life history" interviews with people who were forcibly displaced or who were ex-combatants in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Love life histories are an ethnographic approach to documenting individual intimate life histories in depth. For example, inquiring if and how they talk about getting married; how they met their wife/husband; where people first learnt about sexuality; if people have had children, how they reflect on this and how they navigate their relationship with their kid(s) in this challenging context? These life histories were complemented by radio and audio storytelling methods to engage participants in dialogues about their intimate lives in ways that could be broadcast to the wider community to inspire further discussion and action.

Key Findings

- **The huge disruption to the ordering of life during conflict and displacement affects intimate relationships.** Displacement causes massive social and relational disruptions to daily life with far-reaching consequences in a society where intimate relationships, marriage, kinship and belonging are spatial and temporal orderings that interact with politics and governance. In prolonged displacements, the compounding impacts of this disruption become more salient and visible to those most directly affected by the conflict.

- **Life is tied to land, and land access and use happens through kinship ties that have been disrupted because of the prolonged time spent in camps.** For many people who were born in the camps or to parents who had not married in traditional ways due to the circumstances of war, their status in a family lineage is insecure. That means relational belonging and connection to land needs to be negotiated rather than simply claimed. In an agrarian society where so much of life moves around the cycles of growing, the season and preparing the land and food, there can be a loss of identity when ties and access to the land are contested, unstable, under threat or entirely cut.

- **The normal ways of finding partners and starting an intimate relationship were deeply impacted by the conflict.** In Northern Uganda, the ideal is that you should travel far away from your current home to find a wife, and in following patrilocal norms, the couple then settle in the man's home or community. During the conflict and in the camps, these practices around finding a spouse were not possible.

- **Limited resources and restrictions on mobility meant there were 'no new marriages' in the displacement camps during the conflict.** Marriage involves a process over time and space that includes customary exchanges (e.g., cattle and other gifts and money) from the man's family to the woman's that were not possible during the 20 years of conflict. For example, there were no cattle, so the exchanges that needed to take place to marry could not happen. This does not mean that people didn't start living together, have sex or have children together. Rather it means that no new home was established, as these rituals of exchange could not happen, and the system that people hold very dear was eroded.

> "There was this labour that women, in particular, were putting into keeping these kinds of ties to land and ancestry and lineage in place during the war."
>
> DR HOLLY PORTER

- **Marriage is not linear, it moves, shifts and takes various shapes.** While formal or traditional marriages did not take place, ideas about marriage or what makes a home have begun to adapt in response to the context. The research reveals both evolving norms and contestations around these changes. For example, in the absence or reduction in exchanges taking place, relationships are less stable and can be more volatile. At the same time, other things, like having a child together, constructing a house or farming together have become important ways to express an intention to live life together.

- **Despite the ruptures caused by conflict there is a continuity of many hierarchical social practices.** Despite the vast and sustained disruptions to social relations in Northern Uganda, certain hierarchical social norms remained resilient throughout the conflict. For example, gerontocracy (leadership and power held by the elders) and a patriarchal order (where preference is given to the men) have remained persistent and pervasive. This research assumed that conflict would have called these social norms into question in a much more profound way, but in reality, at least the ideal of them remains strong.

- **Some key social practices valued by women and stemming from intimate relationships were preserved during and after displacement.** For example, the practice of burying umbilical cords of children to affirm the connection between the people and the land continued during the war largely by women in the communities. Despite the disruptions, this practice remained an important part of identity and continues to be practiced.

- **There is a continued loss and grief for an imagined ideal of life.** There is an imagined idea of Acholi life that is rooted in experience and memory, but the continued reverberations of the conflict make this something out of reach for most people. There is a noted discrepancy between what they imagine their lives should be like, and what they are. As a result, there is a process of mourning happening. Even if some of what has been lost is patriarchal or violent, there still needs to be a space for the loss and grief surrounding that in order for there to be a reimagining of what life could look like in the aftermath of war and the experience of new freedoms.

- **Using radio as a method of communication brings new issues and discussions into public debate.** Radio enables a discussion around things that are not the norm. For example, discussing sexual experiences and the silences around different sexual experiences. Radio also allows for greater public engagement in conversations that would not typically be discussed publicly. For example, conversations about how the conflict or COVID-19 changed people's love lives, or if cultural chiefs should be regulating how much 'brideprice' or other customary exchanges to formalize relationships should be. Using radio opened different dynamics of what people think about different topics.

Recommendations

- **Assumptions around intimate relationships and the words used to describe them need to be critically examined and contextually situated.** The way terms and concepts are used and interpreted – for example, 'marriage', 'wife', 'rape', and 'justice' – do not travel or translate in a simple way. They need to be closely examined in conflict-affected context like North Uganda. We need to think about how social concepts are structuring social life and acknowledge that these categories and concepts are contested and incomplete, and that contextual factors are required to understand their impacts.

- **School and curriculum reform are essential and needed.** Discourses in these spaces in the aftermath of conflict are key. An expansion of efforts to discuss social relations and intimate partnerships openly and critically is needed.

- **Work with radio to reach more people, bring voices together, and amplify those who are marginalised.** In the context of rural areas impacted by war, radio can be an effective and influential way of reaching people and discussing important communal issues. Facilitated conversations on the radio can also help build bridges across divides by bringing the rural and the urban, educated and uneducated, and men and women together to discuss key issues that affect them all. Radio is also useful because it can help amplify the voices of marginalised people who might not necessarily be the ones speaking up at community meetings or focus groups.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/sex-love-and-war-2/

PROJECT PROFILE

6.6 Sexuality, Work and Gender Relations in Peacekeeping Missions:
New Approaches to Tackling Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Hub Members

Professor Marsha Henry, Queen's University Belfast

About the Project

This project examines the role of men and masculinity in shaping the knowledge on sexual exploitation and abuse in current or former peacekeeping missions, assessing international local 'sexual' practices, ideas and myths within peacekeeping missions. Based on fieldwork in Bosnia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone and South Sudan, the project includes consultations with UK and other governments to influence Women, Peace and Security actions, particularly relating to sexual exploitation and abuse. Project outputs include academic publications, proposals for practical reform of humanitarian practices and safeguarding guidelines to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian settings.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/sexuality-work-and-gender-relations-in-peacekeeping-missions-new-approaches-to-tackling-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/

6.7 Transitional Masculinity, Violence and Prevention

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About the Project

Gender inequitable and violence-supportive masculine norms are one of the root causes of violence against women. This project investigates the mechanisms that construct aggressive and controlling masculinity in conflict-affected environments to support the construction of alternative masculinities. Specifically, the research sets out to understand from men themselves how they define masculinity and what 'manhood' is to them in the context of Kurdistan-Iraq. In doing so, the project facilitates critical and creative dialogues with men about the socially constructed boundaries of masculinity that seek to inspire a process of learning and un-learning towards alternative masculinities.

This project took place in the context of increased backlash and retrenchment of women's rights in Kurdistan-Iraq. Whilst there have been important legal reforms in the region in relation to women's protection from violence, family law, and political participation, there is an increasing backlash against the development of gender studies, the visibility of women's rights and increased harassment of activists.

Project Approach

Group conversations are facilitated with men from different backgrounds in Kurdish society, responding to and challenging each other about what manhood and womanhood mean. Specific focus groups were held with Imams and religious leaders, with military personnel from the Peshmerga forces, policemen, lawyers, men from the markets, and men who are employed as manual labourers, including goldsmiths and blacksmiths, with varying levels of income from working class to wealthy.

An arts-based approach is employed throughout the research. Images depicting both activities reinforcing and going against traditional ideas of masculinity were used in the focus groups. For example, there were images of men being violent, men in protector and provider roles, and images of men caring for children and doing housework. The images also included women as victims of political and domestic violence and in leader, protector, and provider roles. These collective images were used to inspire discussion amongst the participants.

Poetry writing and photo-text workshops were also utilised in the research. Participants were asked to write and 'define the difficult' in what masculinity means. Lastly, violence prevention workshops for couples were also employed. The use of multiple layers of creativity and critical discussion creates space for the participants to strip away some of the misconceptions and assumptions they have about gender and masculinity, not in an academic way, but in a human way.

Key Findings

- **Some men acknowledge that 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are socially constructed and that men are not violent by nature.** However, these voices that challenge masculine norms are in the minority within the focus groups. Most groups believe in intrinsic natural characteristics of men and women and often conflated sex with gender. Some men express that they are burdened with expectations of masculinity, and this is not who they are or what 'manhood' is.

- **There are persistent patriarchal views.** Men's control over and 'ownership' of women is ingrained in the language men use, the cultural norms and proverbs they cite, their practices, and in the arrangements of daily life, marriage, and kinship structures. There is largely the perception that if a woman defies societal expectations, then a man has the right to use violence against her. There are, however, indicators of change and a crevice in the arguments and the discourses of patriarchy. Some of the men express that parts of these customs and traditions require change and that alternative ideas and norms are emerging.

- **There are contradictory responses when examining the impersonal and the personal.** When looking at sets of image-based prompts, men make statements about femininity and masculinity affirming that male and female characteristics are not inherent and that roles do not need to be ascribed. When these are applied to their own lives and family beyond the pictures, they often take a different and contradictory view.

> " You are sowing some seeds in the community. You may not see the outcome immediately, but you could see the impact in the long run. Because in this context if you just sow seeds, just leave them like this, some of them may grow. "
>
> DR TWANA ABDWLRAHMAN

Photo Credit: Levi Meir Clancy on Unsplash

- **Stereotypes remain strong.** It is difficult on an emotional and psychological level to change entrenched stereotyped views. There is a group tendency to make exceptions and justifications to rationalise gender inequality. For example, female combatants in Rojava are seen as exceptions because they defended their homeland. So, exceptions are made in certain contexts but not others, such as within their home environments or their communities.

- **Despite the challenge of entrenched social norms about gender roles, some participants show meaningful changes in their understanding of gender, equality and masculinity.** There are noticeable changes in the way some participants are willing to challenge their previously held beliefs. This indicates such gender norms, while powerful within society, may only be held at a surface level for some individuals and that when placed in more gender equality supportive environments, men may be willing and able to change.

- **The women's rights movement faces major obstacles.** There is a lack of genuine will by the Kurdish authorities to improve women's rights; failure of the judiciary system to implement reformed laws, specifically in cases where perpetrators are politically or tribally connected; failure of the education system to promote gender equality; and troubling patterns whereby the media is contributing to discrimination, reproducing gender stereotypes, and siding against the women's movement.

- **Here are increased threats and harassment of women's rights activists.** Directed by sexist and politically motivated social and traditional media, patriarchal and conservative religious norms, or misconceptions of feminism, the backlash and defamation campaigns against feminist activists have become particularly visible whenever there is an incident of gender injustice.

> "
> It's very difficult to be hopeful, but I believe if the ideas we share are resonated from other places – from the education system, from the media, from cultural events, art objects, schooling, the mosques – if they are reflected and reiterated and echoed again, they will become very effective. "
>
> DR CHOMAN HARDI

- **There is a diverse array of perceptions and beliefs towards masculinity and femininity in Kurdish society.** Engagement with diverse groups within Kurdistan shows that there is not a singular Kurdish masculinity, but rather a range of masculinities shaped by diverse perceptions, experiences, and social norms.

- **Despite the many ways it harms them, some women believe and uphold patriarchal norms.** Some women have internalised narratives about gender inequality, accept that inequality is natural, and see their characteristics and social role as different from men's.

Recommendations

All Sectors of Society

- **Coordinate responses.** Achieving gender equality is not the responsibility of NGOs and activists alone, and it will not be possible without the engagement of the larger community. An effective approach necessitates coordinated responses from the government, the NGO sector, funders and donors, the media, and the larger community.

Regional Government of Kurdistan-Iraq

- **Support community programmes and non-violence training.** More support for programmes that focus on engaging men, specifically those in positions of power, is needed to bring about change. Men have an important role to play as allies in addressing and transforming patriarchal norms.

- **Embrace the arts to educate.** This research shows that educating through the arts can be effective in raising empathy and building consensus by fostering a less confrontational learning environment. This encourages the process of un-learning, making space for encounters with new ideas and the reshaping of identities and harmful norms.

Local Communities

- **Community ownership is crucial.** It is important that solutions come from the community rather than external contexts. More community level conversations led by local leaders, Imams, educators, and activists are needed on social norms, the exploration of masculinities and femininities, and community led responses and solutions.

- **Engage men and continuously work with them.** Men are increasingly interested in issues of gender equality and are ready to be engaged. Local communities should support them with outreach and education programmes that can lead to the men not only changing their own views but having a positive impact in their broader social and familial circles.

Formal and Informal Educators

- **Education is the key conduit for social change, especially with younger generations.** Gender equality education is needed in formal and informal spaces including the media, schools, mosques, NGOs, civil society, and the government through training and other capacity building work. It is important to work with the younger generation at university level because they are more open to being challenged and to shift gender norms. Changing youth perceptions and practices on gender norms can support long-term and multi-generational change where education programmes play an essential role in introducing and normalising new ideas about masculinity and gender roles.

Researchers and Academics

- Maintain contact and support with research participants who are eager to continue learning. Continued contact with research participants interested in learning more

> **"**
> One of the things we have learned from Rojava is the importance of ownership. The importance of coming up with solutions from your own community rather than having somebody else bring this solution to you. **"**
>
> DR CHOMAN HARDI

and supporting gender equality can be a powerful way to increase your research's potential impact. Sustained engagement with men is particularly important because once participants leave the supportive context of the research, they may return to social contexts in which there are strong norms against gender equality. These social pressures might lead to decreases or full reversals of the positive gains made during the programme.

- **Practice cultural sensitivity.** Engaging men in gender equality work requires contextual knowledge of the local setting and a sensitivity to the ways issues such as gender and religion intersect. Researchers also do not have to address all issues at once – they can focus on gender and masculinity and be aware and responsive to the impact of religion while not addressing it directly.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/transitional-masculinity-violence-and-prevention/

Photo Credit: Levi Meir Clancy on Unsplash

7.1 Migration and Displacement

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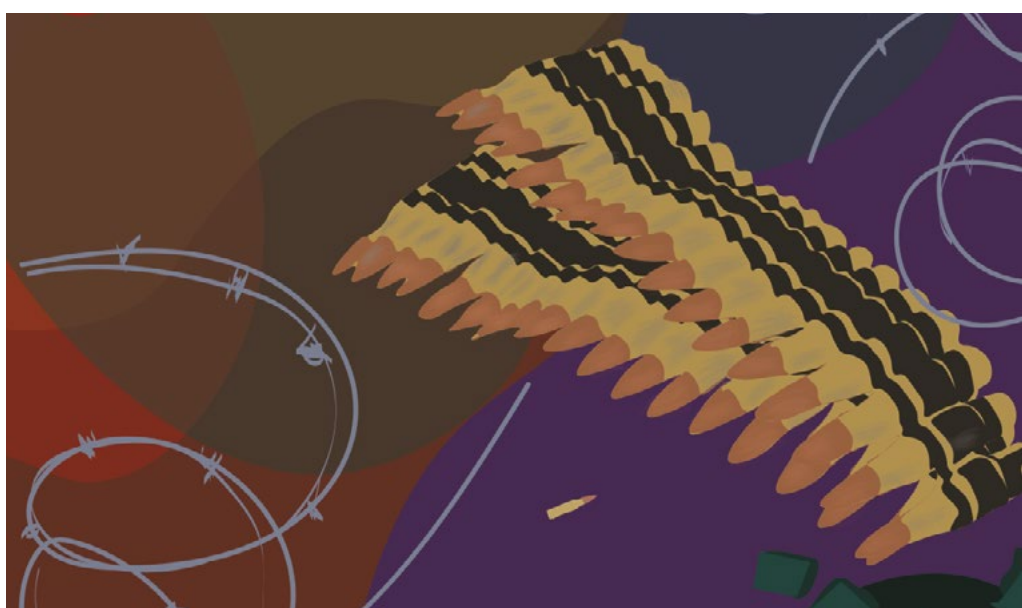
The three projects in the Migration and Displacement stream collectively analyse under-studied gendered aspects of different forms of internal and international displacement and migration in the Middle East and South Asia. They make recommendations to develop policies addressing gendered issues that go beyond top-down discourses and initiatives at the international level to work with community groups and local organisations.

The project on **Gender and Forced Displacement** sought to understand and measure how gender inequalities are affected by forced displacement in Afghanistan, Kurdistan-Iraq, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey, and to examine how these inequalities might be addressed in policies of international protection and assistance so as to facilitate the empowerment and acquisition of skills of displaced girls and women. It found that global discourse on displacement is not embedded in the realities on the ground and that this damaging gap between rhetoric and action is built upon the incorrect assumptions that high level discourse is both indicative of forthcoming policy and that it drives decisions. The granular details of displacement camps living conditions are overlooked in place of broader messages on displacement management.

Across all contexts there were profound differences in terms of health and education by gender amongst displaced groups, and compromised health and sanitation, access to clean water and reproductive health. Displacement accelerated existing gender

inequalities and vulnerabilities and, in some contexts, precipitated early marriage. There were vast differences between male and female participants' ages at the time of their marriage, especially in Afghanistan where early marriage remained a significant reason for girls dropping out of school.

Two key recommendations are that gender inclusive polices and training on forced displacement need to be better implemented at the national level. There is a need for better training and communication of gender inclusive policies at the international level, and for national and local governments to improve both awareness and understanding of why gender analysis in forced displacement policies is so important. Furthermore, in Afghanistan in particular, urgent support is needed to prevent famine and to address systemic inadequate healthcare. While female health professionals are still permitted to work, greater emphasis should be placed on women's access to health, including antenatal care.

The **Return, Reintegration and Socio-Political Restructuring** project went beyond studying return to economically and politically stable countries, to cover gendered experiences of return migration to conflict-affected contexts and how this related to development, gender equality, and justice and inclusive peace in Afghanistan, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It also reviewed return policies of these countries to understand the possibilities, challenges and obstacles for returnees in the process of participating in reconstruction through their human, social and cultural capital.

Return migration is motivated by conditions in both origin and host countries. Factors driving return migration in the host country include poor living conditions, racism, and discrimination (heightened during COVID-19), and improved or stable conditions in the origin county, which can make return either feasible, profitable or both. Many return to their homeland for jobs where they can use the skills learnt in their settlement countries to contribute to the economic and political stability of their post-conflict homeland and participate in the job market.

This project found that women return as frequently as men, but gender norms negatively impact women upon return. A lack of return migration policies and assistance limits some migrants from returning to their homeland with limited opportunities in the labour market and access to housing and education. Some returnees feel alienated from their homeland due to language barriers and/or because of competition between returnees and local people. In Afghanistan, those who returned until 2020 (pre-return of the Taliban) experienced high levels of

social mobility but encountered hindered labour roles, with women more likely to be working part-time than men. Women also faced challenging social norms, discrimination and issues concerning safety and violence.

The third project, **Gendered Dynamics of International Labour Migration**, sought to advance a gender-sensitive understanding of the interaction between economic and socio-cultural drivers of labour migrations and the experiences of work and living in selected capital or large cities, such as Erbil, Kurdistan-Iraq; Beirut, Lebanon; Islamabad, Pakistan and Istanbul, Turkey. While migration remains a key issue globally, less work has been done on gendered migrations in the Global South, and what has been done has largely focused on domestic and care work. However gendered migrations are diverse in terms of educational level, occupations, nationalities and rights, and include migrant women from the Global South and North. Evidence from the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) suggests that women's migration is particularly affected by socially discriminatory institutions. Recruitment agencies have a lot of power in facilitating migration and under what conditions migrant women do so, particularly in countries with kafala systems, such as Lebanon.

Women's agency can be both amplified and strained in migration contexts in their choice to migrate away from their home countries and in their efforts to improve their life conditions. However, women's agency in these contexts was strained by structural inequalities and violence that inhibited and moulded their ability to participate in the labour market. Personal networks based on nationality play more of a key role in women's lives, rather than formal organisations, to build community and improve their working conditions and livelihoods. More research is needed on the diversity of gendered migration in the Global South, along with greater efforts to improve the living and working conditions of domestic workers who are not covered by standard labour laws. In part, this should be done with community groups in order to better understand the lived experiences and distinct needs of migrant women in these contexts, and therefore to create support systems and policies that are cognisant of their needs.

7.2 Gender and Forced Displacement

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About the Project

While the number of forcibly displaced people continues to rise worldwide, there remains very little discussion around the impact of gender and the need for policies directed specifically at women. All too often, women are treated as objects of development, not as informed participants and leaders. In this context, this research explores the nature of migration and displacement (internal and international) for adults, adolescents and children through a gender lens in order to better to understand the many ways gender informs experiences of displacement and access to resources and opportunities in displaced households.

Specifically, the project seeks to understand and measure how gender inequalities are affected by forced displacement in Afghanistan, Kurdistan-Iraq, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey, and to examine how these inequalities might be addressed in policies of international protection and assistance so as to facilitate the empowerment and acquisition of skills of displaced girls and women.

To examine these questions, this project first conducted a semi systematic literature review of how gender is described in humanitarian discourses, including by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), other UN agency reports,

national government reports and NGO reports over a twenty-year period. Next, the project team conducted a survey of displaced populations in all focus countries. The survey aims to better understand how gender features in respondents' lives and how it structures their experiences as well as their current living conditions, finances, asset ownership, safety and security concerns, access to services, social networks and relationship with other displaced people and the host community, and water, sanitation and hygiene issues they face.

Key Findings

- **Global discourse on displacement is not embedded in the realities on the ground.** It is difficult to translate global discourse on displacement from key actors, such as the UN, into national and subnational contexts, and then marry this up with developments on the ground. For example, at the international level Sri Lanka appears to be putting proactive policies in place that are aware of gender realities, but how local laws and policies reflect these priorities is unclear. This damaging gap between rhetoric and action is built upon the assumptions that high level discourse is both indicative of forthcoming policy and that it drives decisions – but this is not the case on the ground.

- **Across all contexts, there are profound differences in terms of health and education by gender amongst displaced groups.** People of all genders lose human and social capital as a result of displacement. However, these effects are further magnified for women on the basis of gender, particularly when it comes to education, as is the case with Sri Lanka.

- **Displacement accelerates existing gender inequalities and vulnerabilities and, in some contexts, precipitates early marriage.** There are vast differences between male and female participants at the time of their marriage. This was particularly evident in survey responses from Afghanistan. Among girls in Afghanistan, early marriage remains a significant reason for dropping out of school.

- **Displacement compromises health and sanitation, access to clean water and reproductive health across all contexts.** There are clear and consistent challenges in accessing sufficient healthcare, food and water, although certain populations struggled more than others, such as those living in rural areas vs more urbanised areas. In Afghanistan, participants record that most income is spent on food and that they often needed loans. Further, only 22%

> "
> You have this double feature whereby, people may lose human and social capital as a result of displacement, but those effects are further magnified on the basis of gender categories as well. "
>
> PROFESSOR BRAD K. BLITZ

of female respondents have access to sanitary towels, with most using cloth. This is especially problematic given the lack of access to clean water.

- **The granular details of displacement camp living conditions are overlooked in place of broader messages on displacement management.** In many contexts the discourse implies that displaced persons living in camps have access to clean water and bathroom facilities. However, often there are no questions asked about how much clean water is available and how often people can access it. This level of detail is overlooked.

Recommendations

International Organisations

- **Gender inclusive policies and trainings on forced displacement need to be better implemented at the national level.** There is a need for both better training and communication of gender inclusive policies at the international level to the national and local governments. Doing so could improve both awareness and understanding of why gender analysis in forced displacement policies is so important.

- **Effective humanitarian training must be made available.** In order to make good on promises and ambitions, as recorded in humanitarian discourse, it is essential to reaffirm these messages with effective training and consistent communication to humanitarian and development partners.

Sri Lanka

The Gender and Forced Displacement project conducted a survey of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Jaffna District in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, one of the areas that still has a large IDP population. The main focus of the survey was to examine the gendered experiences arising from protracted conflict and displacements spanning over three decades. 220 households (182 male-headed and 38 female-headed) were surveyed, which accounts for 54.3% of the total IDP households in the Jaffna District.

The survey gathered data on the respondents' current living conditions, finances, asset ownership, safety and security concerns, access to services, social networks and relationships with other IDPs and the host community, and water, sanitation and hygiene issues they face. The survey also gathered data on the respondents' pre-displacement experiences to compare with their current lives and to examine the role of displacement in the gendered issues they face.

> "
> The vast majority of survey participants currently live in camps, and most of them arrived in these camps in the 1990s. The tragedy is that a large proportion of them arrived in these camps expecting this to be a temporary living arrangement yet are still there after more than 30 years. "

LAKSHMAN ET AL. (2020)
Gender and Displacement in Jaffna, Sri Lanka: Survey of Internally Displaced Persons, 2020.

Key Findings

- **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are still waiting to be resettled or relocated.** During the war more than a million Sri Lankans belonging to the country's Northern and Eastern provinces were displaced from their homes. While the majority of those affected by the conflict have received aid to return, have been relocated, or have assimilated with their new communities, some IDPs are still waiting to be resettled or relocated many years after the end of the war.

- **There are inadequate living conditions and opportunities for IDPs.** The root causes for the protracted displacement and the resultant economic and social issues faced by the IDPs are the result of limited economic and livelihood opportunities. In the context of Sri Lanka, this is coupled with the reluctance of IDPs to accept alternative land proposed by the **government** due to economic reasons linked to the quality/fertility of alternative land offered; the insufficiency of land and housing grants by the government; and a lack of livelihood opportunities in areas where alternative land is offered.

- **There are significant disparities in the ways men and women have experienced protracted displacement over the years.** One of the key differences between male and female respondents' experiences is connected to household finances. The average income of female-headed households (FHHs) is half of that of the male-headed households (MHHs). This has aggravated the poverty levels among FHHs, as indicated by the much larger proportion of FHHs than MHHs reporting that their income is not sufficient to cover household food expenses.

Measures Taken to Protect from Sexual Harassment

Travel with a male member
- 14
- 31

Travel as a group
- 23
- 12

No action taken
- 5
- 0

Avoid travel at dusk/night
- 11
- 42

■ female head of household response   ■ male head of household response
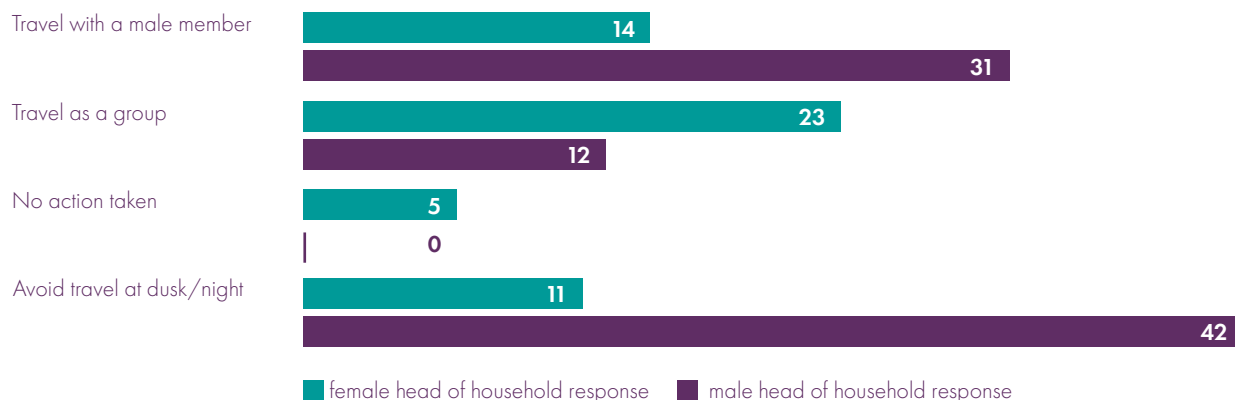
- **There are multiple factors preventing IDPs from returning home, principally access to the land they own.** A key reason why many IDPs are unable to return to their hometowns/villages is that land in those towns and villages is located in high-security zones, which are out of bounds for them. Other reasons include lack of livelihood opportunities, their home is no longer liveable, delays in assistance and poor access to services to enable them to return home.

- **Out of the 220 total respondents, 42.5% of the women and 39% of the men surveyed (90 people in total) stated that they had witnessed sexual harassment in their neighbourhood.** The above data illustrates the measures taken by these 90 respondents to protect themselves and their families from sexual harassment in the area they reside in. Female respondents' most common measure taken or recommendation given to their family to avoid being sexually harassed is to travel as a group. The most common measure taken or recommendation suggested by males is to avoid travelling after dusk. While five females said that they take no action to counter sexual harassment, no males reported that they do not take any action.

Recommendations

Sri Lankan Government and Ministries Working on Forced Displacement

- **Increase the current land and housing grants to internally displaced persons in line with inflation in Sri Lanka.** Continue and expand work on thematic and local level documentation of difficulties experienced by the IDPs so that this information informs policies of protection and assistance in resettlement and relocation. Consider the livelihood sources of internally displaced persons when proposing alternative lands.

- **Use data such as these survey results to create policies grounded in evidence and the lived realties of IDPs in Sri Lanka.** Thematic and local level documentation of difficulties experienced by the IDPs can reliably inform policies of protection and assistance in resettlement and relocation in Sri Lanka. Community enumerations at settlement or neighbourhood scale are known to offer a practical and reliable policy engagement, especially in urban settings, such as in Jaffna. Similarly, the issues regarding the host–IDP relations that were captured in this survey are critical for developing sustainable policy and practice interventions.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit: https://thegenderhub.com/stories/gender-and-forced-displacement/

7.3 Gendered Dynamics of International Labour Migration

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Photo Credit: Oziel Gómez on Unsplash

About the Project

This research seeks to advance a gender-sensitive understanding of the interaction between economic and socio-cultural drivers of labour migrations and the experiences of work and living in different cities: Erbil in Kurdistan-Iraq; Beirut in Lebanon; Islamabad in Pakistan; and Istanbul in Turkey. While migration remains a key issue globally, relatively little work has been done on gendered migrations in the Global South, and what has been done has largely focussed on domestic and care work.

The project addresses this gap by interviewing approximately 25 women and NGO workers in each city, designed to go beyond domestic work by looking at a range of labour sectors where women play active roles. In doing so, this research contributes to a better understanding of the global circulation of gendered labour that is occurring, the drivers of this movement, women's rights and agency, and how migrant women use urban spaces within these contexts.

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Key Findings

- **Discriminatory practices in home countries inform migration.** In each of the four countries there are discriminatory practices and patriarchal norms that influence women's migration. This includes, but is not limited to, sexual violence, domestic violence, discriminatory employment practices because they are women, discrimination against their SOGIE identity, and no legal rights to divorce.

- **Gendered migrations in the Middle East and South Asia are diverse.** Migration is diverse in terms of educational level of the migrant, occupations, nationalities and rights and includes migrant women from both the Global South and North.

- **Women are treated differently based on their race, country of origin and social capital within a given context.** Women from diverse backgrounds face distinct forms of discrimination based on their intersectional identities. For example, in Turkey, cultural capital is important. Women from North America, particularly those who are educated with university degrees, are often able to find good work as teachers, journalists, or translators. In contrast, the women interviewed from the former Soviet Union, who are also educated, go through a process of de-skilling after migration and often end up working as cleaners or live-in carers. This happens, in-part, because they have less cultural capital in the Turkish context.

- **Education levels amongst the women are high, but the value placed on that education once in the country of migration is mixed.** Despite relatively high levels of education, many of the women still face significant hurdles in finding commensurate employment opportunities.

- **Women's agency can be both amplified and strained in migration contexts.** Most women show agency in their choice to migrate away from their home countries and in their efforts to improve their life conditions. However, women's agency in these contexts is strained by structural inequalities and violence that inhibit and mould their ability to participate in the labour market. For example, two of the Syrian women interviewed in Lebanon describe how they ended up in sex work, despite this not being their choice or aspiration.

> **"** The agency comes from these women who are prepared to move, because it takes resources and it takes an ability to actually decide – I'm going to move. Now, I call that really using agency. **"**
>
> PROFESSOR ELEONORE KOFMAN

- **Personal networks based on nationality play a key role in women's lives.** Interviews reveal that rather than relying on formal trade unions or collective forms of organising, many women use personal networks based on nationality to build community and advance their working conditions and livelihoods.

- **Recruitment agencies have a lot of control and power.** Recruitment agencies can control who migrates because they have bilateral agreements with agencies in the countries of origin. For example, they can influence and shape the flow of who and under what conditions migrants are allowed to enter the country. This is particularly the case in Lebanon where they have blocked changes to the kafala system.

Photo Credit: Denise Metz on Unsplash

Recommendations

Academia

- **Close the research gap.** More research is needed that looks beyond domestic labour in the Global South to understand the diversity of reasons for migration. More research is also needed to examine migrants with different educational and skill levels and migrants from both the Global North and within the Global South. The migration of educated and skilled women needs to be recognised and studied.

Governments and International Organisations

- **Abolition of or improvement of the kafala system is urgently needed.** The rights of domestic workers must be improved and additional regulation is needed of the kafala and the recruitment agencies that hire into the system. Domestic workers should be protected by the standard labour laws. These laws should also be applied at a more granular level, beyond the national level. For example, in Kurdistan-Iraq, laws applied to the Kurdistan region rather than Iraq, and the specific factors relevant to Istanbul that may differ from the rest of Turkey.

- **Work with community groups.** Bottom-up rather than top-down approaches are needed in order to better understand the lived experiences and distinct needs of migrant women in these contexts, and therefore to create support systems and policies that are cognisant of their needs.

- **Prevent and stop gender-based violence and sexual harassment.** These forms of violence happen in the home and in public spaces, resulting in a severe restriction on migrant women's use of public spaces in the cities. More work must be done to educate against gender-based violence, to implement laws and policies and to operationalise those that exist to harassment and also to support victim-survivors of gender-based violence in achieving justice that is receptive to their needs.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications — including detailed Key Findings and recommendations for the project's work in Kurdistan-Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan and Turkey — visit: https://thegenderhub.com/stories/gendered-dynamics-of-international-labour-migration/

Photo Credit: Engin Akyurt on Unsplash

7.4 Return, Reintegration and Political Restructuring

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Photo Credit: Lou Lou B on Unsplash

About the Project

Previous research on return migration has mainly covered return to political and economically stable countries. Furthermore, the literature predominantly focusses on economic reasons for return. Much less is known about the gendered experience of return migration to conflict-affected contexts and how this relates to development, gender equality, justice and inclusive peace. This research project explores and analyses the gendered experiences of returnees (forced and voluntary) in Afghanistan, Kurdistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It reviews return policies of the countries under study to understand the possibilities, challenges and obstacles for returnees in the process of participating in re-construction through their human, social and cultural capital.

The project used a mixed methods design, including surveys and structured interviews with 679 migrant participants from diverse education levels, different destination countries, occupations, ages, and genders. In the Afghan context, this research was conducted in Kabul and Kandahar before the return of the Taliban in 2021, making it some of the last data gathered by researchers in the country pre-Taliban.

Key Findings

- **Return migration is motivated by conditions in both origin and host countries.** Factors driving return migration in the host country include poor living conditions, racism, and discrimination (heightened during COVID-19), and improved or stable conditions in the origin county, which can make return either feasible, profitable or both. These factors include political, economic and social changes, access to personal relationships and personal resources, and the relevance of newly acquired skills to the country's development priorities and integration policies. Many return to their homeland for jobs, where they can use their skills learnt in their settlement countries to contribute to the economic and political stability of their post-conflict homeland and participate in the job market.

- **Many young and second-generation migrants return to their homeland in search of identity.** This is particularly true for those who have been born in Europe, the United States or elsewhere and were not born in their parents' homeland, where there is an attachment to positive memories or family. This search for identity is also a search for social and political status where their parents' diasporic identity has been transmitted in the form of political activism or the form of having a responsibility towards their homeland where their skills can offer assistance.

- **Some people returned to pursue education in their homeland.** For some refugees, they were not able to enter the formal education system in their settlement countries because refugees were discriminated against. This was particularly the case for Afghan migrants who have left for Pakistan or Iran. Interestingly, they returned to Afghanistan to seek further education (pre 2021 Taliban takeover).

- **Communication technology and transport routes have a huge effect on return mobility.** The internet, particularly social media, has revolutionised how diasporas connect with their homelands. Diasporas now leverage social media for communication, mobilisation and knowledge exchange across borders. For young migrants and families, these online platforms are particularly impactful. They facilitate communication, information exchange and participation in diverse aspects of life back home. These virtual networks extend existing social capital, built on family and political connections, influencing return decisions and maintaining vital ties.

> "
> Countries should have certain mechanisms, certain institutions to facilitate return migration to encourage people to invest or to come back to these post-conflict countries. "
>
> DR JANROJ KELES

- **Empowerment extends beyond information access.** Social media platforms nurture individual autonomy and a sense of collective identity. Young people can connect with potential employers directly, promoting professional and entrepreneurial opportunities. Virtual networks also strengthen relationships and pave the way for real-world connections, supporting job seeking, civic engagement and building a sense of belonging in their homeland. However, challenges remain. Unequal power dynamics and disparities in access to information can hinder truly inclusive participation.

- **Return migrants positively contribute to their homeland.** Skilled returning migrants, especially women, are comparatively younger, better educated and able to commute between countries of origin and countries of settlement. Most returnees find a job that matches their level of education, for example, in public administration, the health, education and IT sector or social services. Moreover, returnees are often regarded as cross-border intermediaries whose ties to foreign resources and familiarity with their homeland institutions enable them to bring innovative practices to organisations in their countries of origin.

- **Returnees contribute to peace, development and gender equality.** Together with their economic, cultural and political remittances, direct investments, the transfer of knowledge and technology of the host country, and skills and training, returnees are successful in using their human, social and cultural capital. Despite female returnees facing more discrimination based on their gender, lifestyle, political views, ethnicity and age, they play a crucial role in the fight for gender equality and contribute to peace and development.

- **Gender norms negatively impact women upon return.** Many women state that women should have a university education, should work and should be involved in business, but on return they experience multiple gender-based discrimination practices and norms. Many women describe their public space as disappearing, and some experience cultural and societal isolation and exclusion, domestic violence, and verbal and physical harassment in their homeland.

- **Despite numerous studies indicating that only men return to their homeland, this study finds that women return just as frequently.** Women, just as much as men, are returning to their homeland to be part of the political process and to contribute to the economic development of their homelands. In these cases, they often hold roles requiring higher eduction, with 40% of respondents working in education, public administration, finance and health. In addition to this, across all four countries, women returnees have higher education levels than men. Crucially, women use their roles within public and private spaces to contribute to gender equality policies and are very active in advocating for gender equality. This is the case particularly for Kurdistan-Iraq and Afghanistan.

- **A lack of return migration policies and assistance limits some migrants from returning to their homeland.** Returnees and their families face barriers to returning. These include a limited labour market, large salary differences between the settlement country and their homeland, and a lack of returnee policies that would give access to housing, education programmes and entrepreneurship programmes. This means many young people who can contribute to peace and economic development are unable to return.

- **Some returnees feel alienated from their homeland due to language barriers and/or because of competition between returnees and local people.** Some local people resent the return migrants, claiming they do not understand the traumas the nation experienced during the conflict. Furthermore, returnees are accused of leaving the country during conflict and only returning to exploit the job market in the relatively prosperous post-conflict transitional period.

Recommendations

Governments of Kurdistan-Iraq, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

- **Develop sustainable and viable policies to attract highly skilled men and women to return to and contribute to economic development and peace.** Many countries such as India, China, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Armenia, Poland, Ireland, Portugal, Latvia, Spain, and Ghana, as well as several countries in the Caribbean, have already established return policies and have built specific institutions as part of broader migration strategies to attract their citizens or second generations to return and fill the labour market shortages. The governments of Kurdistan-Iraq, Pakistan and Sri Lanka should develop such institutions and policies to benefit from the skills of returnees and implement integration policies. Efforts can also be made by the global Afghan diaspora community and international organisations to engage, organise and mobilise Afghans in advancing gender justice and inclusive peace in their country in ways that might allow for their safe eventual return.

- **Establish Diaspora Affairs Departments to benefit from the human, cultural, social and economic capital of the diaspora in Western countries.** The governments of Kurdistan-Iraq and Sri Lanka should identify evidence of labour shortages, build networks of potential returnees and assess their potential contribution to sustainable development.

- **Work with non-governmental partners to implement policies to overcome constraints on reintegrating returnees and develop positive discrimination policies to benefit from the skills of female returnees.** New strategies should be developed with civil society partners to mobilise migrant knowledge and expertise in the development sectors to change the perception of the country from one of conflict to economic, political and social development. Furthermore, these strategies should also drive forward diversity and gender equality policies and remove barriers that prevent returnees, particularly women, from playing an important role in the decision-making process at local and national levels.

CASE STUDY

Afghanistan

Afghanistan has been witnessing one of the worst internal displacements and refugee crises in the world for more than 40 years. Since the 1970s, it is estimated that 6 million Afghans have fled their country. Despite the ongoing conflict, there have been sporadic waves of returnees settling back in Afghanistan, aligning with changes of political power in the country. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that, although 5.3 million refugees have returned to Afghanistan between 2002 and 2021, 3.4 million Afghans are presently internally displaced and 2.1 million registered Afghan refugees are still hosted in neighbouring countries of Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. Since the regime takeover by the Taliban in August 2021, over 1,268,730 Afghans have fled to regional and international countries. Only 5,622 refugees have returned to Afghanistan since then.

This case study is based on a survey and semi-structured interviews with returnees carried out in Kabul and Kandahar in 2020 and 2021. It provides insights into the motivations and experiences of conflict faced by Afghans who returned between 2001 and 2020. The majority of respondents were returnees from Pakistan after a prolonged time as refugees in exile. A smaller proportion were from Western countries and the Middle East.

Key Findings

- **Gendered patterns and drivers in return migration.** For most returnees, conflict was the reason for leaving Afghanistan in the first place. One of the key drivers for their return was the improved political situation in Afghanistan and family and caring responsibilities, particularly for women. For men, the end of their studies abroad, expulsion and end of visa also played an important factor in their return, suggesting gendered emigration and return patterns.

Photo Credit: Farid Ershad on Unsplash

- **Gendered labour roles and markets persist.** Women were more likely to work part-time than men, allowing them to balance family caring responsibilities and pursue further education at the same time. They were predominantly employed in the third sector working for NGOs, educational institutions, public service jobs and work-in-home services and domestic work.

- **Social mobility upon return.** Both men and women, experienced high levels of social mobility in Afghanistan with a relatively high proportion of returnees employed in jobs that correspond fully with their required level of education. This is in contrast with newly arrived migrants in Western countries who are often employed in jobs far below their levels of education and skills. Educational qualifications, social contacts, and skills and knowledge acquired abroad were seen as useful in resettling in Afghanistan. However, being away for a longer period impacted returnees' ability to build crucial social capital in Afghanistan, which set them back in the job market.

- **Returnees faced significant gendered challenges.** Returnees in Afghanistan encountered a variety of problems and hardships. There were considerable differences between men and women in respect to raising children, finding a job, accessing welfare and healthcare, adjusting to daily life and dealing with bureaucracy. Women were more likely to report challenges in adjusting to the social norms. Women were more likely to point out gender and language as a problem and men were more likely to emphasise discrimination based on ethnicity and political views.

- **Gendered experiences of discrimination, safety and violence.** Group-based discrimination reported by the returnees was based on ethnicity, language, gender, religion, political views, lifestyle, and to a lesser extent age, sexuality and disability. The perception of safety was also highly gendered with almost all women stating that they feel extremely unsafe walking in their local area or

Photo Credit: Farid Ershad on Unsplash

neighbourhood after dark. They also reported experiencing verbal and physical harassment when traveling on their own. This is most acute for those who travel for work and endure harassment by taxi drivers and defamation by neighbours.

Recommendations

- **Engage, organise and mobilise Afghan experts inside Afghanistan and across the diaspora.** In order to support Afghans, in their homeland and in the region, the UN, host countries for Afghan refugees and organisations from the Afghan diaspora need to develop policies to identify Afghan experts and determine how best to utilise their social, human, cultural and economic capital.

- **Exert leverage to catalyse the stalled peace process.** The international community needs to use whatever leverage it has over the Taliban to pressure them to begin the stalled peace process and reconciliation with all facets of the society, especially with women and highly qualified individuals.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/return-reintegration-and-political-restructuring/

Law and Policy Frameworks

This chapter examines the first of two cross-cutting themes within the Hub: **Law and Policy Frameworks**. The chapter starts with a summary of the theme, followed by detailed findings and recommendations from each of the six Hub projects conducting research in this area.

8.1 **Law and Policy Frameworks**

Hub Co-Directors

**Professor Kirsten Ainley,
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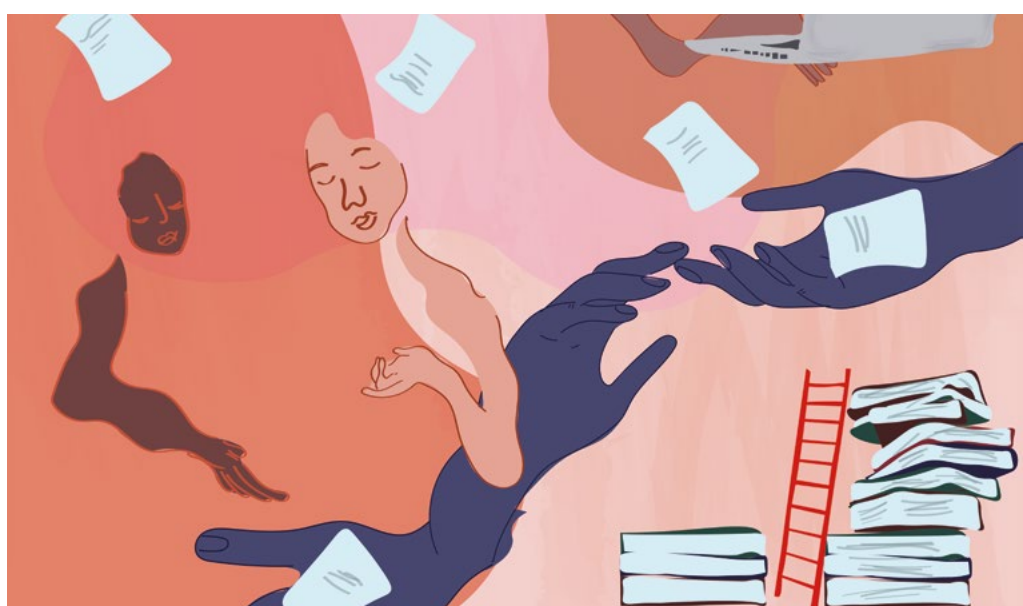
The Law and Policy Frameworks (LPF) stream is one of two cross-cutting work streams that underpinned, connected and enhanced thematic streams on the Hub. LPF projects focused on local-international policy linkages, specifically but not exclusively in relation to: Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality; SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions; and the United Nations (UN) Security Council Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. While most Hub projects focused on Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list countries and explored development challenges in those settings, the Hub was explicitly designed to include consideration of policies and practices promoted at the international level and their effects in target states in the Global North as well as the Global South.

Development challenges are rarely entirely 'domestic' but rather reflect the complex interaction of local, national, regional and global circuits of political, economic and military power. For both SDGs and the WPS agenda, successful implementation requires an alignment between global policy frames and centres of authority (such as the UN itself) and opportunities for change as they exist in context. For example, versions of 'justice', 'accountability', 'participation' or 'protection' favoured by donors and international agencies may not coincide with the interpretation of those terms by local civil society or national governments. At the same time, international legal and policy discourses exercise significant influence, and so shape progress towards the

SDGs and WPS agenda across thematic areas and national boundaries. The projects in this stream addressed such aspects of the development challenge by gathering robust quantitative and qualitative data on the impacts of donor policies, institutional structures, and funding patterns on transitional justice and WPS, and by examining the record to date of transformative conflict resolution and new gender-sensitive protection policies.

There were five projects within the LPF stream:

- **Donor Funding and WPS Implementation** (Boer Cueva, Giri, Hamilton and Shepherd), which explored how women's civil society organisations that are engaged in peace work (often under the auspices of the WPS agenda) in Colombia, Nepal and Northern Ireland experience the funding relationships in which they are embedded.

- **Feminist Security Politics** (Kirby), which examined the extent and effect of feminist advocacy in transforming traditional security practices both before and after the adoption of the WPS agenda in 2020.

- **Funding Transitional Justice** (Ainley, Seth, Wiebelhaus-Brahm and Wilmot), which tracked how donors shape the form(s) of transitional justice that materialise at international courts and in societies that have experienced periods of mass violence and repression.

- **Gender and Conflict Transformation** (Ní Aoláin), which addressed the integration of gender into transformative conflict resolution in complex conflicts, including terrorism and extremism settings, and interrogated Northern Ireland as an apparent site of WPS success.

- **Gender and Justice in Sri Lanka** (Keenan), which explored key political, ethical and methodological challenges involved in the production of politically actionable knowledge about conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence in Sri Lanka.

Key Findings from the LPF Stream Include:

- **Gender is not an "add on" (or a synonym for women).** In many cases gender perspectives are still side-lined, gender-disaggregated data is not prioritised, and the assumption is that including women addresses the "gender dimension" of peace and justice processes. Gender needs to be mainstreamed, recognised as a relation of power, and built into policy implementation at the outset. The inclusion of women in peace, justice and security practices should not be assumed to result in feminist outcomes.

- **Gendered impacts of policy must be examined.** Despite the apparent priority of gender justice and concern for the gendered implications of policy at international levels, too much domestic and international policy and practice still has deeply gendered impacts. Kirby shows that the EU's policy of 'pullback' containment in Libya, where migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean are forcefully returned, increases the risk of sexual violence and other abuses. Keenan finds that confronting SGBV in Sri Lanka has been almost impossible despite years of work by civil society organisations, which has culminated in the 2023 Sri Lankan National Action Plan to Address Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. Wiebelhaus-Brahm and Ainley find that the under-funding of reparations provisions in justice processes denies gender-sensitive redress to victim-survivors. Ní Aoláin shows that counter-terrorism measures impact women and children most acutely, even while notionally targeting men.

- **Language matters.** Different actors attach different meanings to different things (e.g., peace work, justice, etc.) so for policymaking it is important where possible to ensure/socialise a shared understanding of key concepts, including the meaning of 'peacetime' and 'post-conflict', as Boer Cueva et al[1]. show. That said, it is also imperative to maintain a healthy scepticism regarding whether what Kirby and Shepherd call the 'policy ecosystem' of WPS can or should be aligned around socialised shared meanings[2]. Only by remaining attentive to contestation and fracture can we remain critical of the agenda and its biases and privileges even as we work towards its implementation.

- **Silence also matters.** Who gets to speak and what do they talk about? What are the silences and contradictions in discussions, for instance, of the WPS agenda? Is anyone talking about, let alone holding to account, donors and their influence on justice processes? To what extent are we complicit in allowing issues to be articulated in ways that lessen the responsibility and obligations of the most powerful actors in the system?

- **The local-national-global disconnect must be examined.** The domestic and international aspects of key policy frameworks are often not well-connected and local actors are not necessarily finding international frameworks, such as the WPS agenda, useful in their day-to-day work.

- **Amplify local voices. In conflict and conflict-affected settings, the organisations doing peace and justice work on the ground are knowledge-holders and should be valued as such.** Power imbalances and funding shortages disproportionately impact local organisations, limit their access to decision-making spaces and privilege actors in the Global North. Boer Cueva et al. argue that this is particularly problematic in conflict-affected settings, where grassroots organisations have detailed knowledge of the context and are undertaking critical peace work without stable funding.

- **Accountable, transparent, and participatory funding is needed.** International actors, particularly donors, have significant influence in justice and reconciliation work carried out post conflict, yet access to data on funding is poor. Recommendations from projects in this stream cluster around accountability: Kirby advocates for adequate infrastructures for monitoring WPS spend and the establishment of mechanisms that will guarantee multi-year core funding to women's organisations in conflict-affected contexts; and Wiebelhaus-Brahm and Ainley call for increased transparency from donors on how transitional justice decisions are made, robust reporting systems and the alignment of gender and transitional justice strategies so that gender analysis is incorporated into funding decisions. Ní Aoláin argues that the meaningful and sustained prevention of violence requires participatory budget processes, budgeting and allocation of adequate resources in order to strengthen the rule of law, advance accountability and institutionalise human rights.

1   Boer Cueva, Alba Rosa, Keshab Giri, Caitlin Hamilton and Laura J. Shepherd (2022) 'Funding Precarity and Women's Peace Work in Colombia, Nepal, and Northern Ireland', *Global Studies Quarterly* 2(3): ksac034. https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksac034.

2   Kirby, Paul and Laura J. Shepherd (2021) 'Women, Peace and Security: Mapping the (Re)Production of a Policy Ecosystem', *Journal of Global Security Studies*. 6(3). https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogaa045.

8.2 Donor Funding and WPS Implementation

Hub Members

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Photo Credit: UN Women (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

About the Project

Global foreign aid flows reached an all-time high of $161.2 billion in 2020. However, funding to and through civil society organisations (CSOs) remained relatively constant, despite additional funding needs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that CSO funding allocations have not kept pace with the rise in Official Development Assistance (ODA) and the increased global needs.

Furthermore, women and women-led organisations receive a relatively small proportion of this available funding. A 2015 review of funding for women, peace, and security (WPS) initiatives suggested that only 1% of funds provided were targeted toward women-led organisations. These funding patterns are troubling given that CSOs play an invaluable role in peace work. They are often closely embedded in conflict-affected contexts and are better positioned to reach vulnerable and marginalised populations than large government and INGO actors.

More research is needed to understand the dynamics between donors and women's peace organisations, and the extent to which donor funding priorities shape the way they do their work on the ground, and in turn the impact this has on gender justice work more broadly. In response, this project has conducted online qualitative semi-structured interviews with experts from women's peace CSOs in Colombia, Nepal, and Northern Ireland.

Key Findings

- **Donor priorities can have a significant impact on how CSOs frame their work.** Sometimes organisations strategically pursue funding by framing their goals and projects in a way that appeals to specific funders, often compromising on their areas of expertise to secure funding.

- **The frequent use of short-term project-based funding does not match the needs of women-led CSOs in conflict-affected contexts and can hamper the impact of their work.** Interviews reveal that there is a significant need for core funding, not for the more commonly available short-term project-based funding donors offer. Some organisations try to navigate this challenging funding landscape by finding creative ways to use project-based funding to also help support their broader work due to a lack of core funding in this area.

- **Flexible funding is needed in conflict-affected contexts where factors on the ground can change quickly.** In part due to their complex and often adaptive work in conflict-affected contexts, CSOs need flexible funding that can be reallocated or redeployed in response to changes in the working context.

- **Submission and application procedures are cumbersome and not fit for purpose.** Donor funding agencies are increasingly bureaucratising the application process. Small organisations often do not have any dedicated grant, donor, or development staff members who can lead on lengthy bureaucratic processes in order to secure very small amounts of funding.

- **Monitoring and evaluation processes are burdensome.** Interviewees in all three contexts stress that they frequently have to commit to invasive and time-consuming monitoring and evaluation frameworks required by donors to ensure the money is being spent the way it was intended. While accountability is needed on such matters, the current systems again place undue bureaucratic pressure on small organisations over small amounts of money in ways that inhibit their ability to actually do the needed peace work.

- **Funder perceptions of conflict and peace fail to account for the temporality of peace and the persistence of non-linear developments.** Donor funding dries up when peace accords are signed and/or when political actors determine that a conflict is "concluded". This is particularly the case for funding priorities for international, bilateral and multilateral donors and aid agencies. However, peace is messy. War is messy. And conflict does not have neatly delineated beginnings or ends. Donors need to better understand that local populations' experiences of security and violence in conflict-affected contexts do not necessarily correlate with the end of formal conflict.

- **COVID-19 created challenges for women's civil society organisations.** Many organisations report an increase in the perpetration of violence against women; the needs of the community – including mental health needs – became even more pronounced; and the activities that the organisations had expected to be able to carry out are no longer feasible in this new environment.

- **Despite these various challenges, organisations are finding creative ways to overcome bureaucratic hurdles, and are irrepressible despite these hurdles.** The organisations are so committed to the community work they do that they are finding ways to survive and support women even in the face of precarious funding, disease pandemic, and shifting funder priorities.

> " Peace is messy, war is messy, and conflict doesn't have neatly delineated beginnings and ends. So that can affect funding priorities, particularly from international, bilateral and multilateral donors, and aid agencies. "
>
> PROFESSOR LAURA J. SHEPHERD

Recommendations

Funders and Donors

- **Longer-term donor funding is needed.** Donor priorities can shift quickly, especially when there is a perception that a conflict has "ended". But there is a need to increase periods of funding for maximum impact. Interviewees report that funding for at least three years offers an organisation the opportunity to establish a programme, run it effectively, scale its impact and evaluate its success.

- **More core funding for overhead costs and organisational expenses is needed.** Donors should consider providing support for core funding for organisations, and move away from focusing too much on project-based funding. Many organisations (and the communities they serve) need things like transport, room hire and office space, and funding these core needs can make as much (if not more) difference to an organisation's activities and impact than a series of workshops.

- **Peace work requires flexible funding.** While tangible and measurable goals are appealing on paper, they are not necessarily the best way of building and maintaining peace, not least given the unpredictability of conflict and post-conflict settings. This means that funding needs to be more flexible, as do deliverables.

- **Participatory approaches and needs assessments can increase the impact of donor funds.** Donors need to meaningfully engage with civil society organisations to determine the actual needs of the communities. There can be a disconnect between what donors are willing to fund or think should be funded as compared to the work that organisations see as critical to building peace. Open dialogue and the alignment of interests between donors and organisations in a spirit of collaboration should ideally guide the identification of funding priorities.

Photo Credit: Pascal Bernardon on Unsplash

- **Administrative work connected to donor funds needs to be responsive to the limitations of CSOs working in conflict-affected contexts.** Priority should be given to reducing or eliminating unnecessarily complicated or arduous administrative processes and eligibility requirements. Donors should work with civil society organisations to find ways of administering funding (including the tender process and requests to vary a project) that do not exclude smaller organisations from participating in calls for funding.

- **Fund and invest in the capacity building of grassroots organisations.** There is a tendency in some parts of the sector to parachute in experts to talk about issues where there are community-led grassroots organisations doing this same kind of work. Dedicated funding for grassroots organisations who are working on women's rights (including rural organisations and those that represent a diverse demographic, including age, ethnicity and sexuality) is important. These groups have an intimate on-the-ground understanding of the needs of people and communities, which is essential in conflict and post-conflict environments. In particular, investment in capacity building of the grassroots organisations can enable more CSOs to meaningfully participate in the implementation of the WPS agenda, making the WPS agenda more inclusive.

- **Donors need to pay closer attention to the complexity, temporality, and gendered dimensions of conflict and peace work.** There are many aftershocks to conflict, and removing funding from environments marked as 'post-conflict' can restrict civil society organisations' ability to continue to offer community support and deliver peacebuilding initiatives in the longer term. Furthermore, there are all sorts of ways that women's peace work might not look like the traditional model of top-down reconciliation and what donors expect. For example, sometimes peace work involves providing a space for women to learn computer skills so they can find work beyond the conflict economy.

- **Funding should prioritise multi-generational women-led peace work.** Young women need to be engaged in peace work, at both policy and grassroots levels. Beatriz Mosquera Hernández of Federación Humanitaria de Mujeres Negras, Afrocolombianas Raizales y Palenqueras de Arauca (FUMNARPA), expressed this in an interview as the need for 'generational relays'. There is practical knowledge that must be transferred from one generation to the next in order to keep this vital work going.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/donor-funding-wps-implementation/

PROJECT PROFILE

8.3 Feminist Security Politics

Hub Members

Dr Paul Kirby, Queen Mary University of London

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About the Project

This project brings diverse strands of inquiry together to examine the effect of feminist advocacy in transforming traditional security practices before and since the adoption of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in 2000. WPS professed to offer a new way forward and a path towards a more gender just world, but is most often spoken about in terms of its failure. Sometimes this is the failure of governments to meet their obligations, sometimes the inadequacy of policy itself, and sometimes the failure of feminism itself to be radical or intersectional enough.

Drawing on policy analysis, interviews and archival work, this project examines the politics of failure, fracture and renewal in the agenda and its precursors. What different versions of the agenda have been mobilised by states, civil society and international organisations? How can we better map the WPS agenda and related efforts? How might a new conceptualisation of the agenda bring forward new insights on its potential benefits, challenges, and risks? How else have feminists historically reconceived the state and its interests? What futures of WPS are available to some of its champions?

The project addresses these questions and challenges in four ways:

1. **Analysis and mapping of the WPS agenda.** The project analyses a new dataset of 237 WPS policy documents from across the UN system, national government initiatives, and regional and international organisations published between 2000 and 2020. It develops a new view of WPS as a policy ecosystem, constituted by overlapping and rival claims expressing diverse feminisms, rather than as a unified plan.

2. **Libya Case study: Examination of WPS, the European Union and vulnerable migrants.** Drawing on policy documents, human rights reports, interviews with advocates and officials, and an analysis of debates in the EU Parliament and UNHCR's humanitarian evacuation scheme in Libya, the project furthers its examination of WPS in relation to significant and growing evidence of widespread sexual violence at detention sites in Libya, where migrants are imprisoned after interception on the Mediterranean Sea.

3. **Review of the UK's contribution to the Women, Peace and Security agenda over the last fifteen years.** Addressing strengths and limitations, the project analyses successive thematic priorities through the UK's National Action Plans (NAPs), maps WPS spending, and considers common criticism. It draws out recommendations for future plans on infrastructure and monitoring, domestic applications and policy ambition.

4. **Feminist statecraft.** Drawing on the personal archives of several prominent 20th century feminists, the project uncovers a longer history of contentious argument about gender equality and the national interest. In contrast to the dominant image of a liberal or radical feminism expressed in WPS, several of these feminists engaged in theory or practice with arguments from political realism, the perspective that most privileges the sovereign state.

Key Findings

Analysis and Mapping of the WPS Agenda

- **The degree of variation in the WPS agenda is underestimated.** Multiple actors use the WPS label to articulate understandings of gender justice that are not only distinct but at odds with one another, for example, between Palestine and Israel and between NATO and Women's International League Peace and Freedom (WILPF). Seeing WPS as a 'policy ecosystem' shaped by reproduction and contestation supports a more nuanced understanding of the agenda by recognising its many layers of diversity, thinking holistically about its many actors and institutions, and being attentive to the boundaries of what is and is not considered a part of the agenda.

- **Looking beyond the UN Resolutions shifts the focus away from the Global North.** Expanding the search beyond the United Nation Security Council Resolutions, allows for a more diverse ecosystem to emerge that shifts focus away from the Global North as the originator and epicentre of WPS development. For example, the key early role of the African Union's 2003 Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa becomes apparent.

Libya Case Study: Examination of WPS, the European Union and Vulnerable Migrants

- **Despite the EU's commitments on sexual and gender-based violence, substantive protection is limited.** The EU's policy of 'pullback' containment in Libya, where migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean are forcefully returned, increases the risk of sexual violence and other abuses. Current efforts to support vulnerable migrants pale in comparison to the scope and severity of the problem. By 2020 there were approximately 50,000 UNHCR registered refugees or asylum seekers in Libya. Most of those cases faced heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence,

> **"** In this broad WPS agenda, what are the silences, what are the contradictions, what are the multiple contending visions that are unfolding at the same time? **"**
>
> DR PAUL KIRBY

as well as numerous other human rights abuses. But less than 100 people deemed vulnerable were being evacuated per month from Libya by UNHCR, and only dozens had been categorised as facing sexual and gender-based violence vulnerabilities or as women at risk.

Review of the UK's Contributionto the Women, Peace And Security Agenda Over the Last 15 Years

- **The UK NAP focusses on specific issue areas only.** Comparing areas of focus in the UK NAPs to other WPS champion states — defined as those who had produced three or more NAPs between 2005–2020 — the UK has a greater intensity of focus in some areas (men and boys, sexual violence and human rights defenders in early NAPs) and a paucity or absence of attention in others (disasters, human trafficking, climate change and arms control).

- **UK government spending on WPS in the past 15 years is unclear.** There is no dedicated WPS budget or publicly available figures kept. Mapping what is available through spending reporting in the NAPs and annual reports to Parliament estimates that the majority of WPS projects focus on gender-based violence (40%), followed by women's participation (29%) and other agenda-wide issues (13%).

- **There are inconsistencies in the government's approach to WPS.** The UK government has increased efforts in women's participation in peace and security, including creating the Women Mediators Across the Commonwealth network. However, these initiatives lack sustainable funding, NGOs criticise policy gaps, and many activists struggle to attend UK-hosted events due to funding and visa issues.

- **Militaristic agendas are co-opting human rights oriented WPS efforts.** Preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) has overtaken conflict prevention in the fourth NAP. As other scholars have warned, this raises concerns about militaristic agendas co-opting human rights oriented WPS efforts.

> **"**
> So often what we see with nation states is what we call – á la carte WPS. This idea that they can take the parts of the agenda that they like and ignore those that they don't like. **"**
>
> DR PAUL KIRBY

- **All four UK NAPs are outward facing, yet UK policies on related domestic and transnational issues often conflict with or disregard WPS principles.** For example, the UK's arms exports demonstrate a disjunction between the government and civil society regarding conflict prevention and WPS. NGOs highlight the impact of UK arms fuelling conflict and the domestic effects of increased defence spending. UK arms transfer controls are absent from all four NAPs despite being introduced in UN WPS policy.

- **The UK fails to implement WPS in Northern Ireland.** The CEDAW Committee has consistently recommended state implementation of WPS in Northern Ireland, while civil society actors have called for its implementation since the agenda's adoption in 2000, and in the context of subsequent UK NAPs. However, partially in response to the work of this project, the 5th and most recent UK NAP mentions Northern Ireland. This is a welcome change, and one that requires further sustained and substantive progress in future NAPs.

Recommendations

WPS Practitioners and Scholars

- **Complexify and destabilise conceptualisations of WPS. Or forget WPS all together.** The reliance upon umbrella terminology and the idea of it as a single normative architecture has gotten in the way of some more creative and critical work required to achieve gender justice and security in meaningful ways.

EU WPS Policy and Lawmakers

- **Identify and address gaps in EU WPS policy and practice.** Attend to the overlaps between policy areas and think in more concrete terms about what kind of culpability and responsibility there is for the EU and its member states. The ongoing migrant and asylum crisis in Libya is just one example of why this is so important.

UK Government

- **Build an adequate infrastructure for monitoring WPS spend and government approach.** Implement a labelling system to track WPS spending and report annually. Establish mechanisms for multi-year core funding for women's rights organisations in conflict-affected areas. Strengthen civil society and research engagement, reinstate the WPS Steering Group and develop a gender-inclusive, intersectional framework across WPS policy.

- **Promote the WPS agenda domestically.** Extend the implementation of WPS and the UK's NAPs to Northern Ireland. In addition to this, recognise Northern Ireland's peacebuilding work led by women and ensure consultation with local women's civil society.

- **Proactively address migrant vulnerabilities, particularly relating to sexual and gender-based violence.** Improve migration and asylum policies with trauma-informed procedures, non-carceral alternatives, and provide safe routes for asylum seekers.

- **Align UK policies with the WPS framework and agenda.** The UK government should integrate a gender perspective across all its policies, and crucially its climate change policy. It should also strengthen arms transfer control and align with the Arms Trade Treaty, enhance synergies between WPS and human rights frameworks, support the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and coordinate with other WPS champions to address contemporary challenges and prevent duplication of efforts.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/feminist-security-politics/

8.4 Funding Transitional Justice

Hub Members

Professor Kirsten Ainley, Australian National University

Professor Eric Wiebelhaus-Brahm, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Dr Claire Wilmot, London School of Economics and Political Science

Shivangi Seth, Australian National University
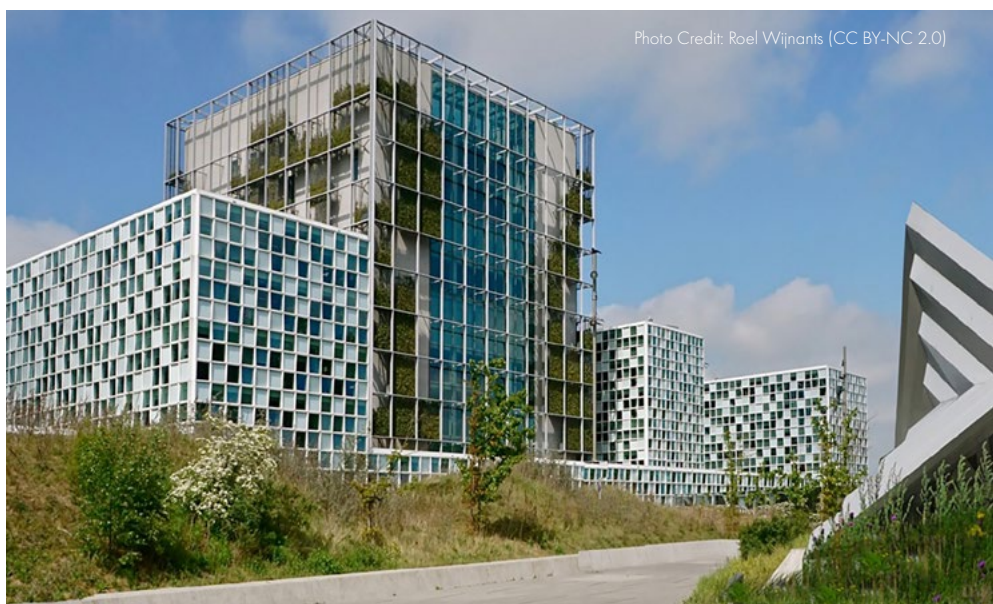
Photo Credit: Roel Wijnants (CC BY-NC 2.0)

About the Project

Donors can have a significant impact on transitional justice (TJ) in societies that have experienced periods of mass violence and repression. Levels of funding influence the type of justice that can be pursued after conflict or atrocity, and the quality of TJ mechanisms. Alongside this, there are often assumptions made that outside actors are driving and shaping justice processes, but many of these claims are based on anecdotes with a lack of hard data to make the connections.

With this in mind, this project used machine learning to sift through massive data sets and analyse long-term trends to generate a systematic comparative study of donor support for TJ, including how much money donors and the international community spend on justice processes, as well as what kind of processes they focus on. The aim of this research is to inform debates about the priorities of donors, including around gender programming in TJ, and the role of international actors in TJ processes.

Key Findings

- **There is a lack of transparency regarding how and where money is spent in justice processes.** Despite increased rhetoric around aid transparency in the foreign aid and policy space, and a growing academic literature base critically examining this area, key gaps in knowledge remain. For example, relatively little is known about how donor funds for TJ are being specifically tracked, spent, and assessed. Furthermore, there is limited transparency about if and how affected communities in conflict contexts are being consulted about how best to use TJ funding. Despite the rhetoric about transparency, this area remains murky and inaccessible.

- **Existing data is gathered and categorised in such a way that makes it difficult to apply a gender lens.** Where data does exist, a gender lens has often not been applied or accounted for. The lack of gender-disaggregated data makes it hard to discern the extent to which gender justice is taken into account in funding decisions.

- **How TJ funding is framed and communicated matters but language and definitions vary across context and donors.** Key terms and their implied meanings, such as "transformation" and "transitional justice" vary across donor and funding contexts. For example, when looking at funding from the UK Government for justice processes, many projects that explicitly invoked 'transitional justice' actually focused on security concerns.

- **Government-driven aid and programmes for justice processes are often fragmented and lack a specific transitional justice strategy.** Often there are multiple different parts of governments and ministries working on justice initiatives, which means the number of projects multiplies, but each has relatively small budgets, leading to a fragmented approach to justice programming and spending.

> **"**
> If we're talking specifically about lack of transparency with transitional justice funding, for example, I think a significant part of the reason is just that the spending touches on so many, or is potentially in so many, different areas. **"**
>
> DR ERIC WIEBELHAUS-BRAHM

Recommendations

Donors and Funders of Justice Processes

- **Transparency is essential.** Donors and funders should prioritise transparency around how transitional justice funding decisions are made. This requires consistent and clear use of terminology, robust reporting systems, and a willingness to engage collaboratively with other key actors and stakeholders.

- **Align gender and transitional justice strategies and incorporate gender analysis in funding decisions.** Many donors have developed gender strategies, and transitional justice strategies, but there is not necessarily an alignment between them, or a recognition of the many ways transitional justice is gendered. There needs to be an awareness of the multiplicity of ways women and marginalised populations are differently affected by conflict, and in turn justice processes. This should impact what and who gets funded, and how.

Government Ministries and Organisations Involved in Implementing Transitional Justice Programmes

- **Direct and sustained consultation with those who are the most impacted by justice programmes is vital to shape which justice programmes are funded and how they are implemented.** Governments need to move beyond tokenistic engagement and engage in meaningful consultation on projects with communities most affected. Whilst there has been more engagement with civil society in terms of developing projects, all too often this is elite civil society, those who are highly educated and from the majority population.

The International Criminal Court

As a part of its wider work examining transitional justice funding, this project developed a new dataset examining the evolution of the International Criminal Court's (ICC) funding and investigated how it has been used to advance political agendas, as well as its alignment with the Court's stated priorities on gender equality, gender justice, and prosecuting sexual and gender-based crimes. The following case study provides a deeper dive into this area of the project's work.

Funding issues lie at the heart of many controversies facing the (ICC), with critics questioning its efficiency, allocation of resources, and focus on certain regions. Budget pressures intensified during the 2008 Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic, leading state parties to demand greater efficiency and a broader scope of investigations. The ICC struggles to deliver impartial justice while relying on unpredictable state funding, and often underestimates its resource needs. States may use their financial support to maintain control over international courts or discipline rivals while claiming the moral high ground.

Key Findings

- **The ICCs budget is influenced by state parties and the political environment.** The ICC's reliance on state parties for funding and the politicisation of its budget are highlighted by the response of state parties to the Ukraine situation. While the increased funding may support the Court's work on gender-based crimes, it also raises questions about the ICC's impartiality and its ability to convince state parties that it provides value for money. These funding dynamics suggest that the Court is a tool of powerful states. Funding constraints are introduced when the Court demonstrates independence and investigates situations that wealthy States Parties would prefer they avoid.

- **Budget allocations hinder the ICC's ability to uphold the rights of defendants.** The Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) receives 32% of the Court's budget, while only 2.2% is dedicated to defence counsel. This represents a weaker investment in defence legal aid compared to previous international criminal tribunals.

- **Many State Parties are behind in their funding commitments.** Debt politics is another issue the ICC faces, as many state parties fail to pay their dues, which affects the Court's ability to fulfil its mission. As of 2019, predominantly rich state parties were the largest debtors, collectively owing €80 million when the ICC's annual budget was slightly over €148 million. The Rome Statute contains provisions to sanction state parties for nonpayment, but these consequences are limited, particularly for richer countries. Mechanisms do exist to punish funding shortfalls, but they largely target poor countries that are not strategic allies of wealthy states parties.

- **Funding for gender-related work within the ICC has changed focus over time.** The Court's proposed budgets have seen an increase in gender mentions over time, and the focus of requests has shifted from representation and resources for gender-sensitivity training to psychosocial resources for victims and witnesses, gender analysis in investigations and fair gender representation at the Court.

- **Restorative justice cannot be achieved for sexual and gender-based crimes without stable funding for the Trust Fund for Victims (TFV).** The TFV, responsible for reparations and victim support, is significantly underfunded and struggles with unpredictable funding sources. The TFV relies on voluntary donations, which is unsustainable, and states should focus on tracing, freezing, and seizing assets of convicted persons to provide funds for reparations.

- **The responsibility for underfunding the Trust Fund for Victims (TFV) primarily rests with wealthy States Parties, indicating that they are less committed to restorative than to retributive justice.** Providing meaningful and timely reparations has been challenging for the Court, with only a fraction of eligible victims receiving tangible benefits. Although the Reparations Order in the Ntaganda case is a victory for gender-sensitive reparations, fulfilling the TFV's mandate still depends on sufficient funding from state parties and other actors.

What Does the ICC Spend Its Money On?

Source: Programme Budgets of the International Criminal Court (ICC-ASP/20/10).

2022 proposed and approved line-item budgets (in thousands of euros)
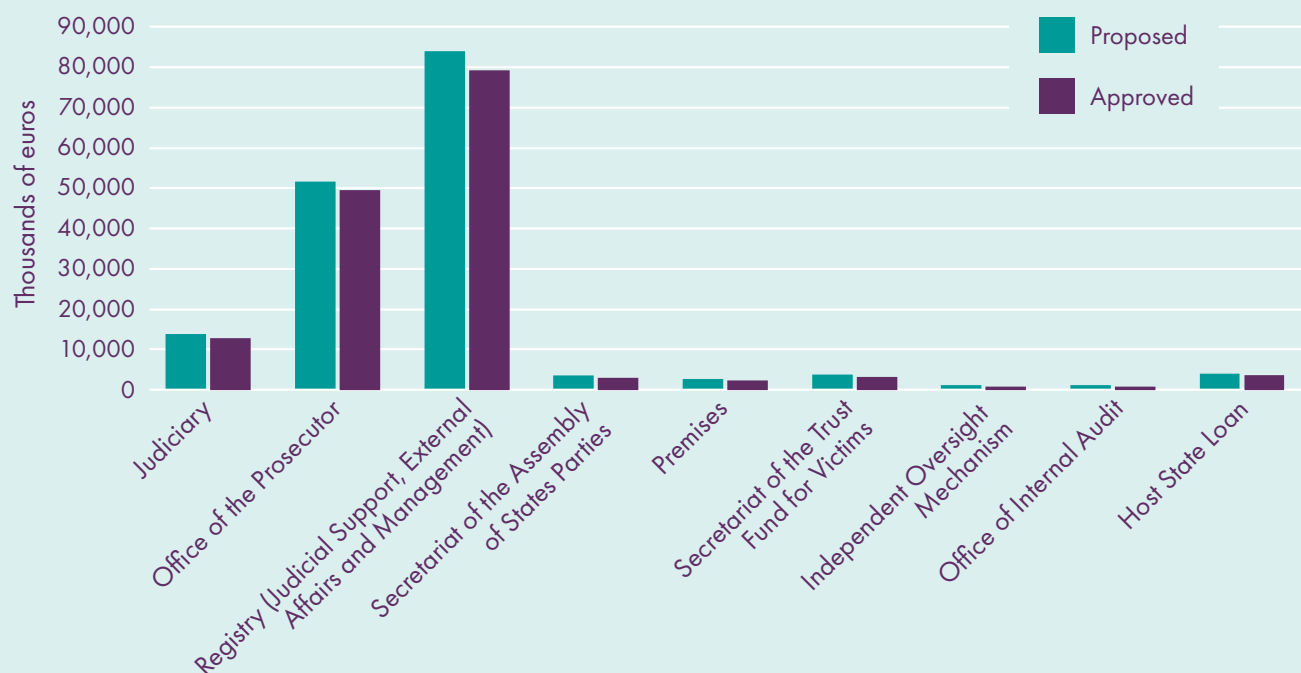
Photo Credit: Kristin Wilson on Unsplash

Debt Politics

Top debtors in 2019 by absolute amount in arrears (amount in euros)

▮	Brazil €18,071,000	▮	Argentina €4,607,000
▮	Japan €16,960,000	▮	Mexico €3,419,000
▮	France €12,510,000	▮	Nigeria €1,233,000
▮	United Kingdom €9,064,000	▮	Chile €1,078,000
▮	South Korea €6,230,000	▮	Greece €547,264
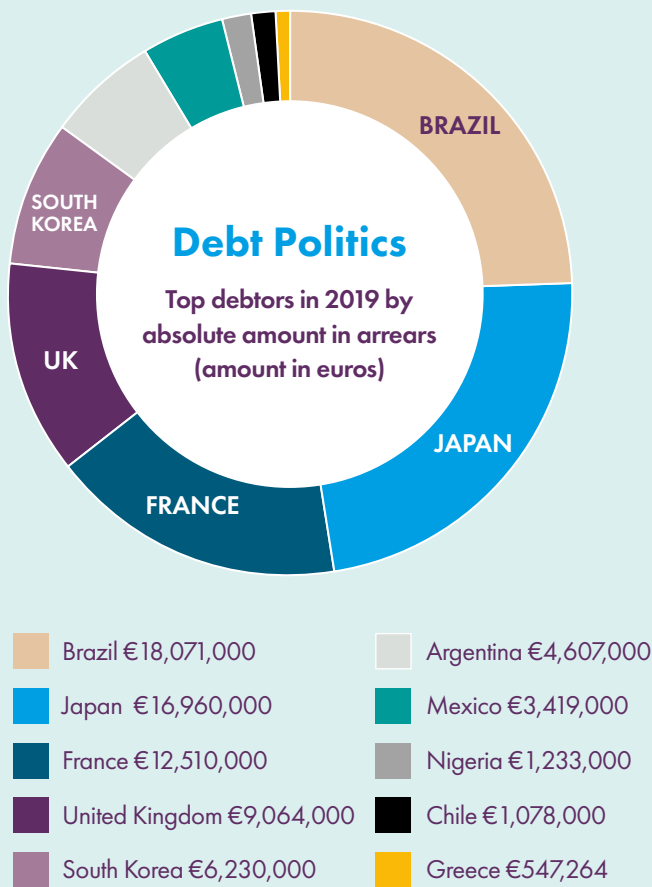
Source: Report of the Committee on Budget and Finance (ICC-ASP/18/5)

" Providing financial support to the ICC allows states to demonstrate a commitment to global accountability norms while tarnishing rivals, as evidenced by Western governments interest in funding investigations of crimes arising from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "

WIEBELHAUS-BRAHM AND AINLEY (2023)
'The evolution of funding for the International Criminal Court: Budgets, donors and gender justice'

Number of Mentions of Gender in ICC Proposed Budgets

Largest Debtors

Predominantly rich states, which collectively owed €80million when the ICC's annual budget was slightly over €148 million (2019).

▮ Rich State Parties' debt

▮ ICC's annual budget

€148m

€80m

Recommendations

Donors and the International Criminal Court

- The Court and donors should adopt a gender mainstreaming approach to all budget and resource allocation issues.

- More money needs to be devoted to delivering tangible benefits for victims over administrative costs.

- The Trust Fund for Victims, needs more of its funding to come from mandatory contributions to facilitate stability for planning purposes.

The International Criminal Court

- The Court needs to demonstrate to state parties the impact that uneven and unreliable funding has on its ability to deliver timely and effective justice. It also needs to communicate more clearly that donations must not be targeted to specific situations or potential prosecutions as this calls the independence of the Court into question.

- Additional resources are needed to sustain and expand progress on prioritising gender-based crimes and crimes against children across all parts of the Court's operations.

To learn more about this research project and read its publication visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/funding-transitional-justice/

8.5 Gender and Conflict Transformation

Hub Members

Professor Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Queen's University Belfast

Photo Credit: Em Diesus (CC BY 2.0)

> "
> Everything I've learned and everything I know about conflict and violence is rooted in that fundamental experience of growing up and being shaped by the Northern Ireland conflict. "
>
> PROFESSOR FIONNUALA NÍ AOLÁIN

About the Project

This project addresses the relationship between gender norms and counter-terrorism policy and considers masculinities in the context of fragile conflict settings that intersect with terrorist groups and engagement with violent actors. The research uses a gender analysis to examine how states manage conflict, violence and terrorist threats while paying close attention to the gendered impacts of both terrorism and counter-terrorism. Informed by project lead Professor Fionnuala Ní Aolain's work as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Counterterrorism, this project draws on insights gained during Special Rapporteur country visits, reports to the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council, interface with UN entities and policy analysis to explore these issues in detail.

The project overlaps with several outputs specific to Northern Ireland, focused on learning the lessons from the Northern Ireland conflict related to gender, conflict and violence on a global scale. Northern Ireland is widely regarded as a triumphant story for transformation to a more peaceful coexistence. However, this success narrative requires further examination and critique. This project looks at the limits and temporality of the Northern Ireland peace and gender inclusive "success" story and questions the limits of gender and conflict transformation if Northern Ireland is one of its best-case scenarios – where it is only some 30 years after the peace agreement that we begin to see real shifts towards a gender-inclusive politics.

Key Findings

- **There is a false assumption that counter-terrorism measures are neutral, and that men and women are not differently affected by their use.** For example, most of the targets of countering terrorism finance measures are men in the Global South. But in reality, the impacts of these measures also acutely hit women and children, especially in cases where the women's income is tied to the man's and their access to banks or capital is negotiated through the man. When you target a man, you are effectively targeting a woman who might have very little financial autonomy to be able to then mediate or mitigate the harm that is done to her.

- **Absence of women in security spaces. Women remain under-represented in security roles and processes.** When women are present, it is often in lower-ranking positions of power and done so through tokenistic efforts aimed at the appearance of gender diversity rather than the practice of addressing structural gender inequalities and redistributing power more equitably.

- **Anti-terrorism and security measures are not detached from fundamental inequalities, and security measures are increasingly being used against persons of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and women.** Counter-terrorism misuse has pervasive and evidenced discriminatory aspects, specifically the misuse of counter-terrorism measures against religious, ethnic and cultural minorities, women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ and gender-diverse persons, Indigenous Communities, and historically discriminated against groups in society. With no globally agreed definition of terrorism, states have unilateral power to define who is a terrorist or extremist often without consequence.

Photo Credit: Fredrik Öhlander on Unsplash

- **There are layered and multi-dimensional consequences for civil society actors being subject to counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism misuse.** These consequences include judicial harassment, administrative measures, counter-terrorism financing restrictions, listing and sanctions, and the weaponisation of new technologies such as spyware and drones. The misuse of multiple measures sequentially or together compounds the scale of human rights violations experienced by individuals, their families, and the communities to which they belong.

> "
> Counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism are being used to target, constrain, and attack civil society across the globe. But civil society are the ones who protect and insulate our societies from the conditions that produce violence. "
>
> PROFESSOR FIONNUALA NÍ AOLÁIN

Recommendations

These recommendations are drawn from the "Global Study on the Impact of Counter-Terrorism on Civil Society & Civic Space" and Ní Aoláin's UN General Assembly reports.

The United Nations and Its Member States

- **Reorient away from militarised approaches to counter-terrorism programmes, and prioritise investments in rule of law-based approaches throughout the work of all UN entities, to focus on addressing the conditions conducive to terrorism and violence.** This includes agencies, funds and programmes that specialise in legal and security sector reform, good governance, gender equality and women's peacebuilding, and broader community-based violence prevention focusing on those core areas of work rather than adapting programming to demands of counter-terrorism narratives.

- **Assume accountability for existing commitments to concretely mainstream gender equality and human rights.** This should specifically be done through transparent and urgent implementation of the gender-marker within the UN Office of Counter Terrorism, in consultation with UN Women and the Controller's Office, and adopt overdue procedures on the allocation of a minimum 15% of all funds for counter-terrorism efforts to human rights and gender equality, as originally recommended in 2015 by the United Nations Secretary-General.

- **Establish effective and transparent accountability mechanisms for violations of human rights resulting from the misuse of counter-terrorism measures.** Where such patterns of misuse are identified, they must be named, and where cumulative patterns of misuse are identified, technical assistance and capacity building must cease and be subject to a revised risk assessment. The Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate must find effective measures politically and legally to address such misuse including consideration of "grey lists," namely a formal mechanism to identify member states who abuse human rights while countering terrorism.

- **Rebalance domestic budgets and allocations to address the prevention of violence in a sustained, long-term and meaningful way.** This requires participatory budget processes, budgeting, and allocation of adequate resources to strengthening of the rule of law, the institutionalisation of human rights; the advancement of accountability; and mainstreaming of anti-corruption and structural commitments to ensure prevention. It means less growth in counter-terrorism norm production and institutions and accepting the value proposition of investment in creating the conditions that effectively prevent terrorism, including a functional and diverse civil society.

Regional Organisations

- **Enhance procedures for overseeing the impact of counter-terrorism measures on civil society.** Strengthen the role of regional human rights mechanisms in building connectivity between positive commitments to addressing the conditions conducive to terrorism and preventing violence in line with international and regional human rights law commitments. Practices should also be standardised to prevent, address, and respond to reprisals for civil society's engagement in regional processes at the national level among members.

- **Engage with regional human rights mechanisms to improve working relationships and entry points for civil society in regional systems mirroring the UN recommendations.** This should also facilitate cross-fertilisation or twinning across diverse regions for member states and regional organisations investing in and developing human rights-based and prevention-based approaches to counter-terrorism.

- **Take note of evident power imbalances and funding challenges that disproportionately impact organisations working at the local level.** Here, dedicated efforts should be made to facilitate those organisations close to the ground, in touch with affected communities and elevating their voices and their access to resources and political spaces.

Civil Society

- **Continue to engage in cooperative relationship building locally, nationally, regionally, and internationally drawing on and building out from existing relationships.** This includes the continued elevation of local partners to ensure that those most marginalised and at the centre of these violations remain at the centre of responses to counter-terrorism and are given the space and support to speak globally, consistent with the mantra of "nothing about us without us".

- **Continue to engage proactively with the Human Rights Treaty Body Mechanisms and Special Procedures Mechanisms in elevating their experience of human rights violations for themselves and for those they represent.** Civil society has created the evidence basis to date and will remain imperative to the work of these Mechanisms in continued documentation and jurisprudential development and augmentation.

To learn more about this research project and read its publication visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/gender-and-conflict-transformation/

8.6 Gender and Transitional Justice in Sri Lanka

Hub Members

Alan Keenan, International Crisis Group

Photo Credit: Fredrik Öhlander on Unsplash

About the Project

This two-part project explores key political, ethical and methodological challenges involved in the production of politically actionable knowledge about conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence in Sri Lanka. It analyses the challenges of gathering information safely in a heavily militarised and closely monitored environment. Further, it investigates the ways in which the protocols and textual strategies adopted to negotiate these constraints complicate the domestic and international reception of the reporting, particularly as these are read through the lens of the political divisions and mistrust that characterise Sri Lanka's partial and now stalled "transition".

In its second, and inter-related part, the project explores how these same, and closely related, politico-epistemological challenges have been handled by those international initiatives and organisations (primarily, but not only, the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative) that have supported (or responded to) research

and advocacy on conflict-related sexual violence in Sri Lanka – particularly with respect to accountability and reparations.

As part of this, the project looks at how this support, and the larger international architecture of reporting and accountability on conflict-related SGBV, has been experienced by local civil society organisations. This research looks particularly at organisations made up of and/or working closely with victims

and survivors in the hopes of gaining an improved understanding of how women's and civil society groups' experience of transitional justice interventions by international agencies and NGOs are affected by differential power relations and limited transparency.

In addition to publications on each of these two parts of the project, outputs include evidence for policy reform and Sinhala and Tamil translations of policy papers.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit: https://thegenderhub.com/stories/gender-and-transitional-justice-in-sri-lanka/

9.1 **Methodological Innovation**

Hub Co-Directors

Professor Mazeda Hossain, Nottingham Trent University

Professor Neloufer de Mel, International Centre for Ethnic Studies
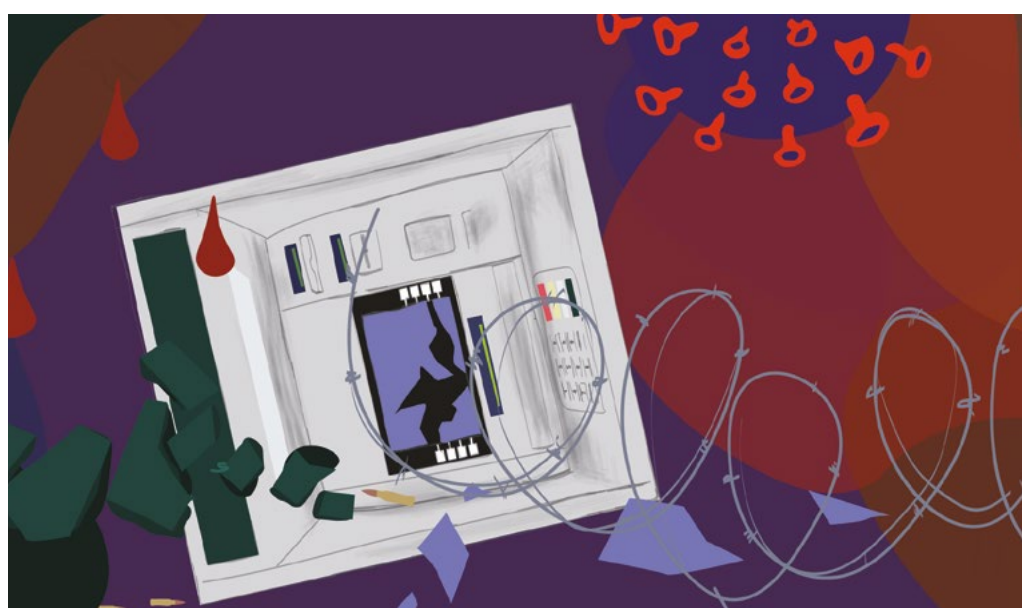
The Methodological Innovation (MI) stream addresses critical issues related to conflict, gender, violence, health, and methodological innovation using an interdisciplinary lens. These projects are based in diverse global contexts ranging from Colombia, Uganda, Sri Lanka, and Guatemala to ones drawing lessons from various other regions affected by conflict and fragility. The projects in this stream aim to use innovative methodological approaches to address some of the key issues facing the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. The key problems addressed include the marginalisation and stigmatisation of female ex-combatants, the challenges of implementing gender equality measures in post-conflict settings, the impact of crises on research methodologies, and the need for innovative approaches to measure and enhance societal wellbeing and resilience in conflict-affected and fragile settings.

Six projects were part of the MI stream:

Innovative Methodologies and Methodological Innovation

(AR Boer Cueva, K Giri, C Hamilton, J Kim, LJ Shepherd)

This project explores the understanding and utility of innovative methodologies among Hub researchers, with a focus on feminist ethics and reflexive approaches.

Key issue this project sought to address: The challenge of practicing feminist research ethics in crisis contexts and the need for context-specific and creative research practices.

Methodological approaches used: The project conducted surveys with Hub researchers, emphasising critical reflexive approaches, feminist ethics, and the relational nature of research. It used mixed methods, including textual, audio, survey, tabular, visual, fabric, quantitative, and archival data.

Comparative insights: This project highlights the importance of reflexivity and relationality in research, emphasising that methodology is inseparable from the desired societal impact.

The Global Wellbeing and Resilience Index (GWRI)

(M Hossain, G Ferrari, L Bacchus, L Kiss, C Liu, Y Makhlouf, L Kenny, E Klaus, B Allen, J Kennaway, J Conway)

The Global Wellbeing and Resilience Index (GWRI) measures five dimensions of population wellbeing and resilience with 138 indicators, particularly in conflict-affected settings.

Key issue this project sought to address: The need for a comprehensive quantitative tool to assess and improve societal wellbeing and resilience, especially in conflict-affected and fragile contexts.

Methodological approaches used: We developed the GWRI with the input of 158 women peacebuilders and experts. Together, we identified variables that are essential to wellbeing and resilience – health, the environment, state institutions, livelihoods, and social cohesion. The Index includes data on 120 countries and combines quantitative data (e.g., pollution levels, population health, biodiversity) and qualitative assessment data (e.g., societal trust, institutional integrity) to measure countries' performance in a range of areas relevant to wellbeing and resilience.

Comparative insights: The GWRI provides an innovative multidimensional framework and quantitative index that can be used for policy development, resource allocation, and monitoring, highlighting the interconnectedness of health, environment, institutions, livelihoods, and social cohesion.

Rights Research with Social Media

(K Ainley, G Dancy, C Wilmot)

This project examines the backlash to transitional and gender justice on social media in Guatemala, Colombia, Uganda, and Sri Lanka.

Key issue this project sought to address: Understanding the role of social media in shaping public opinion and resistance to gender justice initiatives.

Methodological approaches used: The project uses social media analysis to understand the characteristics and implications of backlash to transitional and gender justice.

Comparative insights: The project underscores the need for social media companies and international institutions to address and mitigate backlash against gender justice efforts.

From Female Combatants to Filmmakers

(E Pauls)

This project focuses on the experiences and aspirations of female ex-combatants in Colombia and Uganda, using participatory documentary filmmaking.

Key issue this project sought to address: The marginalisation and stigmatisation of female ex-combatants, and the reversal of gender equality progress post-conflict.

Methodological approaches used: The project employs a participatory research design, training female ex-combatants to conduct peer-to-peer interviews and produce videos documenting their perspectives and experiences.

Comparative insights: The participatory approach empowers female ex-combatants to share their stories, highlighting the importance of their contributions to peacebuilding and the need for sustained support for their reintegration.

Narrating (In)Security

(N de Mel, V Chandrasekaram, R Perera, R Gnanarajah)

This project uses art-based approaches to explore the impact of the Sri Lankan civil war on Tamil women.

Key issue this project sought to address: The need to understand and document the long-term effects of conflict on women's lives and their social and political relations.

Methodological approaches used: The project employs applied theatre and videography, engaging participants in storytelling, image theatre, and playback theatre exercises.

Comparative insights: Arts-based methods provide a powerful means of communicating research, fostering a deeper connection with the material and supporting collaborative storytelling and inquiry.

The Stories of Research

(W McInerney, N Armstrong, E Pauls)

This project critically examines feminist participatory methodologies used within the UKRI GCRF Gender, Justice and Security Hub.

Key issue this project sought to address: The challenge of implementing participatory methodologies that genuinely reflect the lived experiences of participants and address epistemic violence.

Methodological approaches used: The project uses story circles, participatory workshops, interviews, and digital storytelling methods to elicit reflexive dialogue among researchers.

Comparative insights: Reflexive dialogue and critical awareness are essential for uncovering the benefits, challenges, and risks of participatory methodologies, promoting more ethical and impactful research practices.

Key Findings

- **Reflexivity and Relationality:** Across the projects, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of reflexivity and relationality in research. Methodologies must be context-specific, considerate, and collaborative, recognizing the collective nature of knowledge generation.

- **Impact of Crises on Research:** Crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, budget cuts, and political upheavals test the resilience of research methodologies and ethical frameworks. Researchers must be prepared to adapt and respond to these challenges.

- **Marginalization and Stigmatisation:** Female ex-combatants face significant challenges in post-conflict settings, including stigmatisation, economic hardship, and a reversal of gender equality progress. Their contributions to peacebuilding are often undervalued and underutilized.

- **Long-term Reintegration:** Sustained support for female ex-combatants is essential for their successful reintegration and for building sustainable peace. This includes addressing economic opportunities, health concerns, and societal stigmatisation.

- **Innovative Methodologies:** The use of innovative methodologies, such as participatory filmmaking and arts-based approaches, or conducting online interviews with individuals who would not normally be able to participate in a research project, can enhance the impact and reach of research, fostering deeper engagement and understanding among diverse audiences.

- **Comprehensive Wellbeing and Resilience Assessments:** Tools such as the Global Wellbeing and Resilience Index provide valuable insights into the multidimensional aspects of wellbeing and resilience, supporting more effective policy development and resource allocation, especially in conflict-affected and fragile settings.

Recommendations

- **Ground Research in Reflexivity and Collaboration:** Researchers should design and conduct studies in collaboration with the communities they seek to serve, recognizing the collective nature of knowledge cultivation.

- **Draw on Participatory and Arts-based Methods:** These methods should be mainstreamed in conflict-affected contexts to facilitate spaces for conflict-affected people to share and process their experiences, contributing to more ethical and impactful research.

- **Enhance Data Collection Efforts:** Greater investment in data collection, particularly in fragile and low-income settings, is needed to address critical gaps and improve the assessment of societal wellbeing and resilience. Disaggregated data on sex, age, and other key intersectional areas is urgently needed.

- **Promote Gender Equality:** Implement policies and programs that prevent and respond to gender-based violence, promote gender equality, and ensure the meaningful participation of women in all stages of peace processes.

All projects used feminist participatory and collaborative approaches that were adaptive to changing contexts while always adhering to strong ethical and safeguarding principles. These projects aim to contribute to more resilient, equitable and peaceful societies through innovative methodological advancement.

PROJECT PROFILE

9.2 From Female Combatants to Filmmakers:
Expanding Women's Agency in War and Peace

Hub Members

Dr Evelyn Pauls, London School of Economics and Political Science/Berghof Foundation

Personal archive of female ex-combatant, Colombia. Berghof Foundation/ Communication Committee of Pondores (Comité de comunicación de Pondores)

Video

I Have to Speak – Colombia and Uganda https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOjwUPr0l6k

About the Project

Building upon previous participatory documentary research with female ex-combatants funded by the Berghof Foundation in Aceh, Burundi, Mindanao, and Nepal, this project examines the experiences and aspirations of female ex-combatants in two new contexts: Colombia and Uganda. These stories of female ex-combatants from diverse political, religious, ethnic and national backgrounds show that women and their experiences of armed conflict must be taken seriously for building sustainable peace.

Despite a focus on gender in the peace accord in Colombia, the implementation, especially from the perspective of female ex-combatants living in the demarcated Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation (Epacios Territoriales de Capacitacion y Reinforporacion or ECTRs), is severely lacking. Female ex-combatants continue to face stigmatisation and economic hardship, with limited opportunities to create sustainable

> "
> What I find resonates most with the women is that I tell them that I will share this with other women who are currently in the same situation that they were in – and that is most powerful. "
>
> DR EVELYN PAULS

livelihoods. There is also a sense that any progress in gender equality that was achieved during their time in the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia or FARC) has been reversed.

In Uganda, although most women who were abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) as children have returned from the bush many years ago, they still face the consequences of that time daily. Community stigmatisation, lack of economic opportunity and long-term health concerns are continued challenges. The biggest concern for most returnee women is the marginalisation their children born in captivity face. Due to the lack of family ties, these children usually have no claims to land and no community belonging.

This project partners with researchers in Colombia and Uganda, who are themselves former combatants, to analyse the various challenges and opportunities faced by female members of non-state armed groups that are currently going through peace processes and to distil the lessons learned by women who have undergone similar processes in the past.

This project uses a participatory research design to train female ex-combatants how to conduct peer-to-peer interviews and how to film and produce videos that document their perspectives and experiences. While doing so, they reflect on their reasons for joining the movements, their time as women in war, and how their lives unfolded once peace was restored. Theirs are stories of friendship and camaraderie, of life and death, of perseverance and resistance, and of rebuilding lives after war and continuing the struggle in peaceful ways.

Key Findings: Colombia

- **Female ex-combatants have created a community, but they face impoverished and isolated living conditions.** Living in the camps provides a vital space for community building amongst the female ex-combatants. These connections with each other were described as vital by the women. However, they have poor access to safe and viable food, housing and workable land. In some cases, they are living in worse conditions than during their time as combatants housed in the jungle. The camps are also separated from other villages and communities, creating barriers to reintegration.

- **Post-conflict reintegration reverses any progress on gender equality.** Female ex-combatants experience a return (or an expectation to return) to traditional gender roles, including care work and childrearing, after demobilisation. There is a sense that any progress in gender equality that was achieved during their time in the FARC has been reversed.

- **Gender equality rhetoric fails to deliver.** Female ex-combatants expressed disillusionment with the peace process, including both government and male FARC leaders who claimed to be advancing a progressive gender equality agenda but failed to deliver in the face of a sustained gender backlash.

- **A multi-generation repeated cycle of stigma and poverty leaves ex-combatant families with little to no opportunity.** Having previously been banned from having children whilst FARC combatants, there is now a "baby boom" in female ex-combatant communities. The women expressed both joy that their children were growing up in times of peace and frustration at the ways the children are subjected to stigmatisation from the wider Colombian society.

- **Female ex-combatants' capacities to contribute to peacebuilding and reconciliation are underutilised and undervalued.** Skills they have developed during their time in the group (e.g., managing conflict in a diverse group of people, building community in difficult circumstances, pushing for gender equality and so on) could be useful in a wider peacebuilding context. Yet, they are underutilised and undervalued.

Video interview with female ex-combatant from La Guajira, Colombia. Berghof Foundation/Communication Committee of Pondores (Comité de comunicación de Pondores)

> **"**
>
> I was a militant for 20 years in the FARC, and the experience I had there in terms of gender, was something like 50-100 years ahead of society. **"**
>
> TATIANA

Video interview with woman returnee, Wigweng, Uganda. Berghof Foundation/FOWAC

Key Findings: Uganda

- **Lack of economic opportunity and stigmatisation of female ex-combatants are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.** Many women returning home could either not locate their families or were not welcomed back by them, resulting in severe forms of societal stigmatisation and poverty. The same applies to children born in captivity, who are stigmatised because they lack family ties, which severely reduces their economic opportunities. This can push them to criminal activity, creating a repeated cycle of discrimination and lack of opportunity to build sustainable livelihoods.

- **Female ex-combatants do not have access to land.** Land ownership is patrilineal in Uganda and passed down by fathers. Female ex-combatants discussed how the women rejected by their families, or those who do not know where their families are, could not access land resulting in threats to their livelihood. For their children born in captivity, this is further exacerbated by limitations on their ability to get identity cards or access to government services without knowledge and confirmation of their father and his clan.

- **Long-term reintegration support neglects important aspects such as health concerns.** While many long-term reintegration programmes include livelihood activities and psychosocial counselling, the long-term physical health concerns of ex-combatants are rarely factored in. Some of these are visible conflict-inflicted injuries such as bullet wounds. However, others only emerge after many years, such as back or knee problems from carrying heavy loads at a young age. These injuries can limit their ability to farm and work in labour-intensive jobs, thus threatening their livelihoods.

> **"**
>
> What angers us is the community stigma, it is ever more painful than the rape because it was not our will to be abducted. So, life is hard for us. **"**
>
> AMONY

"

People engage with this in a different kind of way. It makes them think about conflict or women in conflict in a different way that's less clinical, it's less binary, it's more messy and more real in a way. "

DR EVELYN PAULS

Reflections: A Participatory Approach

- **Participatory projects support increased engagement and investment from participants.** These approaches are more likely to create long-term changes in people's mindsets and behaviours because they are grounded in people's lived experiences.

- **Decolonising research is needed, and participatory approaches can help.** Participatory methods have the potential to contribute to the decolonisation of peacebuilding by uncovering underlying power structures and inequalities.

- **There are substantial challenges and risks in participatory research.** Careful design is necessary to avoid reinforcing existing power hierarchies or bringing unresolved tensions to the forefront. Further, participation requires time and resources. Planning and implementing participatory methods takes more time than traditional research, and additional costs should be factored in for activities such as co-designing workshops and providing compensation for participants, especially marginalised groups.

- **Filmmaking is a powerful means of communicating research.** Visual and creative mediums like filmmaking offer a powerful and complementary alternative to traditional research outputs that can help policymakers and key actors connect with the material on a deeper level. Films also create an effective way to expand the audience to the general public.

Recommendations: Colombia

Actors Involved in Peace Processes Including Government, Armed Groups and International Organisations

- **Engage with and represent diverse women and women's groups.** Ensure meaningful participation of a diversity of women's groups including female combatants, victims, and Indigenous groups in all stages of the peace process. Incorporate and utilise their skills, experiences, and perspectives in the peace process. Specifically ensure there is an ongoing exchange with marginalised groups of women during and after agreements are reached.

- **Mainstream and fund gender work holistically.** Mainstream diverse gender perspectives through all aspects of potential agreements including disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR), land rights, economic opportunity and transitional justice. Guarantee continued funding for gender issues throughout the implementation process.

Civil Society

- **Connect with and support ex-combatants.** Seek engagement with female members of armed organisations to build bridges across the feminist movement and support peer-to-peer learning for other female ex-combatants.

- **Address living conditions and livelihoods for women and their families.** Focus on safe and sustainable housing, food and work opportunities for female ex-combatants. Programmes must also increase attention and resources directed towards children of war and the compounded forms of stigmatisation and violence they face.

Recommendations: Uganda

Ugandan Government

- **Marginalised communities must be engaged with and supported.** Continuously engage and support marginalised communities in post-conflict parts of the country, especially female returnees and their children born in captivity.

- **Processing of birth certificates and national ID are essential.** Currently, if you do not have a birth certificate and you do not know your paternal lineage, you cannot get a national ID, which means you cannot access any government services. This policy needs to be removed and the process simplified to get a birth certificate and national ID when parents and birth location are unknown, so that children born in captivity can access government services.

- **Long-term health matters.** Programmes working with female ex-combatants must account for long-term health impacts when developing reintegration planning. The negative impacts of conflict do not end with the conflict – they linger and continue to harm women physically, mentally, financially and socially.

International Actors and NGOs

- **Proactively address stigmatisation and discrimination.** Work with a wide range of actors and community leaders to address stigmatisation and discrimination of people formerly associated with armed groups. This should be driven by the needs of the affected population.

Video interview with female ex-combatant, Colombia. Berghof Foundation/Communication Committee of Pondores (Comité de comunicación de Pondores)

Methodological Recommendations

Researchers and Practitioners

- **Move beyond the rhetoric of participation.** Researchers purporting to use participatory, decolonising and feminist methods must move beyond the rhetoric of participation and engage in the challenging, time and resource-intensive work of actually practicing it.

- **Tailor the approach to each context.** Every process and every group of contributors is different. What works well in one context might be unwelcome in another. Any workshop, process or training, like the method itself, must be adjusted based on context and participants.

- **Protect the integrity of the process.** After a decision is made to use participatory methods for the project, there can be the (often unconscious) temptation to influence the process. Taking a back seat as the researcher or only contributing in a toned-down way can be challenging, but doing so is crucial to protect the integrity of the process.

- **Expectation management is key.** Even in well-run processes, participants might develop unrealistic expectations about possible outcomes of the project. This must be clearly addressed and well managed by the facilitators throughout the process so that expectations that cannot be met at the end of the project do not stand in the way of potential positive impacts.

- **Importance of facilitation and communication at eye level.** The role of the facilitator(s) is key throughout the implementation of any participatory process. Ideally, one or more of the participants can facilitate the process themselves. Both internal and external (co-) facilitators should be particularly aware of any existing power relations among participants and find appropriate ways to balance them and to allow for equal participation of everyone.

- **Budget for participant remuneration.** Compensation for the participation of affected communities in research projects is often overlooked. Taking time off from a regular schedule, missing work, organising childcare, covering for agricultural labour etc. has costs for participants and should be considered, especially when the process involves marginalised groups. This should also allow for continued commitment to the process by the participants.

- **Guard the safety of participants.** In any context, but particularly in conflict-affected contexts, guarding the safety of participants is a priority. Contributing to a lengthy participatory process with an external actor, such as a Western peacebuilding organisation, might put people at risk. Participants might also not be comfortable participating freely, depending on the design of the process and who is in the room.

- **Adaptability is essential.** Be flexible and ready to adjust activities and approaches while the project is ongoing. Furthermore, be willing to adjust your own and the funder's expectations as well as outcomes to protect the integrity of the process.

- **Partial implementation is possible.** Participatory methods are not a take it or leave it-proposition. Different parts of the project cycle can be designed to include participatory elements.

Video interview with female ex-combatant from La Guajira, Colombia. Berghof Foundation / Communication Committee of Pondores (Comité de comunicación de Pondores)

Video interview with woman returnee, Wao, Northern Uganda. Berghof Foundation/FOWAC

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit: https://thegenderhub.com/stories/from-female-combatants-to-film-makers-expanding-womens-agency-in-war-and-peace/

PROJECT PROFILE

9.3 The Global Wellbeing and Resilience Index

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About the Project

The Global Wellbeing and Resilience Index (GWRI) measures the wellbeing and resilience of populations across various dimensions. It provides a comprehensive assessment of how well countries are ensuring the wellbeing and resilience of their populations. The GWRI is multidimensional. It uses a multidisciplinary approach to measure the factors driving wellbeing and resilience, especially in settings affected by armed conflict and fragility.

The GWRI combines quantitative data (e.g. pollution levels, population health, biodiversity) and qualitative assessment data (e.g. societal trust, institutional integrity) to assess countries' performance in areas relevant to wellbeing and resilience. Between 2020 and 2024, we developed the GWRI using a multidisciplinary and multi-staged approach. The project met with 58 women peacebuilders, experts in health, policy and law, gender, economics, development, fragility and conflict to identify key areas for societal wellbeing. The project used these areas and a literature review of existing indices to develop a new framework and index. The research team mapped the index's dimensions and items to 48 publicly available datasets and identified 435 candidate variables for the GWRI. The team then assessed all variables for methodological soundness and coverage, and reduced redundancy in the data. The final index reports scores for 119 countries using 188 indicators organised in five dimensions.

Dimensions and Sub-Dimensions: The GWRI has five dimensions, which peacebuilders and experts identified as essential to wellbeing and resilience - health, the environment, state institutions, livelihoods and social cohesion. Within and overlapping these dimensions, we identified 34 sub-dimensions. (See Table 1)

Table 1. Index Dimensions and Sub-Dimensions

SUB-DIMENSIONS	DIMENSIONS				
	Health	Environment	State institutions	Livelihoods	Cohesion
Environmental threats					
Climate Change	●	●			
Air Pollution	●	●			
Natural resources management					
Biodiversity		●			
Land and Water Pollution Management		●			
Sustainable Consumption and Food Security	●	●	●	●	
Water and Sanitation	●				
Quality of institutions					
Right to Personal Expression					●
Societal Trust					●
Power Sharing					●
Institutional Integrity			●	●	●
International Reputation			●		●
Structural violence					
Conflict and Government Oppression	●		●		●
Systemic Oppression and Violence					●
Resilience		●	●	●	●
Socio-economic outcomes					
Urban development			●	●	
ICT Accessibility			●	●	
Participation in Education				●	
Labour Conditions and Employment			●	●	●
Financial Status				●	
Household Resource Management				●	
Health over the life course					
Child and Adolescent Health	●				
Reproductive Health	●				
Sexual Health	●				
Infectious Diseases	●				
Drug, Alcohol, Tobacco, Road Safety and Health Services	●				
Interpersonal violence					
Violence Against Children	●				
Violence Against Women	●			●	●
Online Violence			●		
Health systems performance					
Health Services Processes	●		●		
Health Services Delivery	●				
Mental Health Services	●				
Elder Care Services	●				
NCD Services	●				
Disability Services	●			●	

Key Findings

- **The Global Wellbeing and Resilience Index (GWRI)** is a new tool for peacebuilders, policymakers, civil society and researchers. It accounts for the complexity of systems that promote societal wellbeing and resilience, especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS). It can be used in multiple ways at the local, national and global levels:

  - **Identifying Areas of Need:** The GWRI produces scores for each dimension, in addition to a country's global score. It also offers an indicator-level breakdown and ranking. This will enable peacebuilders to identify areas that require urgent attention and learn from similar settings.

  - **Resource Allocation and Mobilisation:** Peacebuilders, policymakers, service providers and international organisations can use the GWRI to understand where a country is struggling. The GWRI can support more effective allocations of resources to address the most pressing needs.

  - **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The GWRI provides a framework for monitoring peacebuilding and societal wellbeing initiatives over time, helping to assess whether interventions are improving wellbeing and resilience.

  - **Policy Development and Strategic Planning:** Policymakers can develop targeted policies that address specific needs in dimensions where their country scores are low. The GWRI can be used to inform long-term strategic planning.

  - **Advocacy and Awareness:** Civil society can use the GWRI data to develop local advocacy initiatives.

  - **Programme Design:** The GWRI can guide the design and implementation of programmes aimed at improving specific dimensions of wellbeing, such as health or social cohesion.

Hub focus countries
Hub project countries
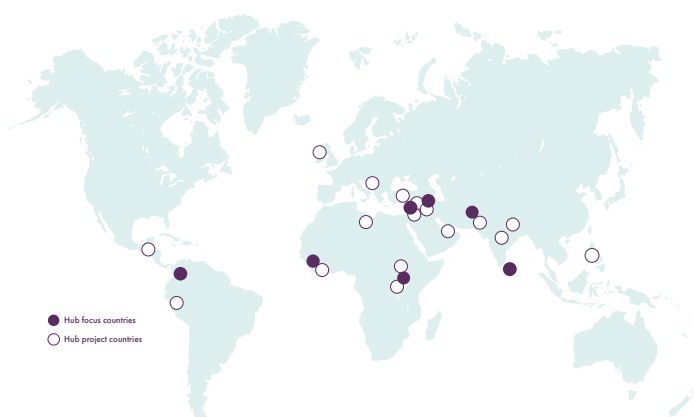
- **Priority Setting:** International organisations can use the GWRI to identify priority areas and countries that require additional support.

- **Research:** The GWRI is a comprehensive multidimensional dataset that can be used to analyse factors that contribute to wellbeing and resilience, especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings. It can also be used to identify research gaps in existing research.

- **Policy Recommendations:** Researchers can use the GWRI to develop evidence-based policy recommendations aimed at improving societal wellbeing and resilience.

- **The GWRI shows that health, the environment, formal and informal institutions, livelihoods and social cohesion are the pillars of wellbeing and resilience, according to women peacebuilders and fragility and conflict experts.** Within these dimensions, the most important areas that peacebuilders and experts identified are: environmental threats such as climate change and air pollution; natural resource management (e.g. biodiversity and water and sanitation); quality of institutions (e.g. right to personal expression, societal trust and power sharing); structural violence (e.g. conflict and government oppression); socio-economic outcomes (such as education, labour conditions and employment and management of resources in the household); health status (such as child and adolescent health and reproductive health); interpersonal violence (against children, women and online); and health systems performance (e.g. processes and delivery, and some specialist services, such as mental health, disability and elder care). The GWRI measures how countries fare in these and other domains to provide insights for action to peacebuilders, policymakers, civil society and researchers.

- **Health is the dimension in which countries generally fare best, with scores aligning with overall performance across dimensions.** Health showed the smallest gap between top and bottom performers, with a 39-point difference between Australia and Haiti. High-income countries like Sweden, Canada, and Finland consistently ranked at the top, while fragile and conflict-affected settings such as Yemen, Afghanistan and Haiti ranked lowest, highlighting the impact of instability on health outcomes. Regional disparities were evident, with Western European and Nordic countries generally outperforming regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Conflict-affected countries reported worse health conditions

due to ongoing conflicts preventing healthcare delivery. Middle-income countries such as Brazil, Argentina, China and India showed more variation across dimensions but maintained relatively high health scores. Gender disparities were significant, with women facing higher risks of mental disorders and worse oral health, while men were at greater risk from air pollution, substance use, and road injuries. Age also impacted health outcomes, with young people in low-income countries more susceptible to infectious diseases. Globally, young women experienced a higher mental health burden compared to older men.

- **Livelihoods is the dimension with the greatest disparities around the world.** Yemen ranks lowest at 120th and Norway highest at 1st, demonstrating the greatest inequality in this dimension. Fragile and conflict-affected countries such as Afghanistan, Haiti and Venezuela also rank poorly, reflecting severe economic instability and limited opportunities. The livelihoods dimension examines economic stability and opportunities, revealing that more young women are not in employment, education or training (NEET) than young men globally, with larger gaps in regions such as Central, Western, and Southern Asia, Latin America and Africa. Financial inclusion is poor in low- and middle-income countries, especially for women, with only 11% having a bank account compared to 47% in high-income countries. These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to improve economic opportunities and financial inclusion, particularly in the lowest-ranked and most vulnerable countries.

- **There is considerable room for improvement in the environmental performance of all countries.** The environment dimension examines how well countries address environmental challenges, with Austria being the top performer at 77 points, yet still lagging behind the best performers in other dimensions. High-income countries such as Austria, Denmark and Germany generally perform better due to robust environmental policies. In contrast, low-performing countries such as Iraq (41 points) and Afghanistan (42 points) face severe environmental challenges, including air pollution, inadequate waste management and limited access to clean water and sanitation. These issues are exacerbated in fragile and conflict-affected settings, where environmental degradation can have significant economic and health consequences. The worst environmental performers have similar scores to the worst performers in health, state institutions and cohesion. Key priorities should include preserving habitats, preventing biodiversity loss, managing flooding risks and addressing

local consequences of climate change. Overall, the GWRI underscores the critical need for global efforts to enhance environmental resilience and sustainability.

- **Fragile and conflict-affected countries (FCAS) face significant challenges in achieving high levels of wellbeing and resilience.** Countries such as Yemen, Afghanistan and Haiti consistently rank at the bottom, reflecting low scores across multiple dimensions, including health, environment, state institutions, livelihoods and social cohesion. FCAS fare worse than other countries in the health, livelihoods and environment domains, with people in these settings experiencing poorer socio-economic outcomes, recording a 19-point difference on average compared to the rest of the world. Autocracies also perform worse than democracies across all five domains, with democracies scoring an average of 11 points higher (67.38 vs. 56.48). Countries with active conflicts, such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen, report worse environmental conditions, with an average score 13% lower than countries without conflict. These poor environmental conditions worsen health outcomes, as evidenced by the low health scores in conflict-impacted countries such as Afghanistan and Yemen, suggesting inadequate healthcare access and poor health outcomes.

- **Systemic oppression and violence are higher among women.** Violence against women and child sexual abuse: women are almost twice as likely to experience physical or sexual intimate partner violence in fragile settings than in the rest of the world. Reports of child sexual abuse is also higher in fragile settings. Average femicide rates are higher in Latin America and the Caribbean compared to the rest of the world. Eight of the 10 countries with the highest femicide rates fall within this region. Gender-based discrimination: women experience higher levels of gender-based discrimination compared to men globally.

- **The extent of missing data is of concern.** Out of 226 countries in the world, 107 do not have enough data to be included in the index rankings. Countries without a score are among the most fragile and lowest income. The majority are in Africa, suggesting the need for greater data collection efforts on this continent. Missing data hinders our ability to address the critical issues driving societal wellbeing. Limited disaggregated data: no country has enough data to compute a gender or age breakdown of the index or its dimensions. Only 129 of 188 indicators offer a gender breakdown for at least some countries, and only 92 indicators have an age breakdown.

Table 2. Global Wellbeing and Resilience Index Rankings

This table presents a comprehensive ranking of 120 countries based on the Global Wellbeing and Resilience Index (GWRI). It includes each country's overall index rank and individual rankings across five key dimensions: Health, Environment, State Institutions, Livelihoods and Cohesion. The rankings provide a multifaceted assessment of national-level societal wellbeing and resilience factors.

COUNTRY	GLOBAL RANK	DIMENSIONS				
		Health Rank	Environment Rank	State Institutions Rank	Livelihoods Rank	Cohesion Rank
Sweden	1	3	10	3	2	1
Norway	2	8	22	2	1	8
Denmark	3	17	2	4	3	18
Finland	4	6	7	1	5	26
Belgium	5	14	14	7	12	5
Switzerland	6	13	16	5	16	2
Ireland	7	18	6	12	6	11
Germany	8	2	3	9	15	33
New Zealand	9	15	21	6	8	23
Canada	10	5	31	18	11	13
Australia	11	1	40	8	9	17
Austria	12	30	1	14	10	25
Spain	13	7	4	19	18	22
Netherlands	14	29	25	16	4	6
France	15	25	8	17	17	7
United Kingdom	16	11	15	13	7	40
Estonia	17	33	20	10	14	16
Czechia	18	21	24	22	20	12
Italy	19	12	5	26	24	28
Lithuania	20	20	27	23	25	3
Portugal	21	10	19	20	29	15
Korea, Rep	22	23	34	15	22	10
Slovak Republic	23	26	9	27	26	20
Slovenia	24	22	30	37	19	14
United States	25	4	29	33	13	64
Latvia	26	58	18	24	23	4
Japan	27	9	23	21	21	69
Croatia	28	49	11	28	30	21
Uruguay	29	32	36	11	35	30
Poland	30	53	17	43	28	46
Hungary	31	59	12	46	27	36
Greece	32	55	13	31	38	38
Cyprus	33	62	28	30	36	27
Bulgaria	34	44	26	44	33	37
Singapore	35	31	67	29	31	47

Romania	**36**	35	33	45	39	29
Costa Rica	**37**	27	37	36	41	42
Chile	**38**	52	44	35	45	32
Serbia	**39**	42	87	48	37	41
Albania	**40**	76	60	41	50	19
Thailand	**41**	24	51	79	40	51
Brazil	**42**	19	70	53	44	88
Kazakhstan	**43**	37	54	68	34	85
Panama	**44**	40	46	63	57	49
Argentina	**45**	63	82	52	59	24
Mongolia	**46**	39	88	65	58	34
Armenia	**47**	43	89	59	53	48
Russian Federation	**48**	38	71	95	32	70
Mexico	**49**	54	47	73	47	59
Mauritius	**50**	91	45	25	77	31
United Arab Emirates	**51**	34	53	58	66	55
Georgia	**52**	95	108	38	56	9
South Africa	**53**	75	66	40	62	65
Colombia	**54**	28	74	56	70	62
Moldova	**55**	65	80	75	60	39
Ecuador	**56**	70	55	51	61	76
Vietnam	**57**	77	79	61	48	63
Ukraine	**58**	68	98	89	49	35
Türkiye	**59**	41	115	76	46	61
Malaysia	**60**	51	86	66	64	60
Sri Lanka	**61**	71	48	55	67	73
Belarus	**62**	16	73	102	43	101
Indonesia	**63**	80	94	34	79	58
China	**64**	56	109	77	42	82
India	**65**	61	93	39	74	78
Dominican Republic	**66**	57	58	64	68	80
Bosnia and Herzegovina	**67**	74	69	82	52	79
Uzbekistan	**68**	36	81	57	73	92
Kyrgyz Republic	**69**	83	97	92	54	45
Peru	**70**	87	64	67	65	87
Philippines	**71**	85	56	50	89	68
Tunisia	**72**	64	106	72	88	44
Kuwait	**73**	46	111	74	75	86
Jordan	**74**	73	57	86	87	67
Qatar	**75**	47	113	60	84	75
El Salvador	**76**	48	101	93	71	84
Paraguay	**77**	66	116	80	78	66
Morocco	**78**	45	59	83	93	96
Ghana	**79**	114	105	32	69	71
Jamaica	**80**	86	107	70	51	109
Nepal	**81**	102	100	49	86	57

Rwanda	**82**	78	77	81	92	81
Azerbaijan	**83**	82	112	100	55	98
Tanzania	**84**	106	32	47	97	89
Algeria	**85**	69	102	99	83	72
Kenya	**86**	94	63	54	85	110
Lao PDR	**87**	84	50	109	82	74
Nicaragua	**88**	50	92	116	63	102
Egypt, Arab Rep.	**89**	60	83	112	94	50
Cambodia	**90**	97	41	103	76	93
Bolivia	**91**	101	84	78	72	106
Iran, Islamic Rep	**92**	67	49	105	95	103
Tajikistan	**93**	72	62	106	80	114
Malawi	**94**	90	39	62	117	94
Senegal	**95**	109	103	42	115	52
Benin	**96**	115	104	69	100	43
Côte d'Ivoire	**97**	103	52	71	107	99
Togo	**98**	98	91	97	108	53
Sierra Leone	**99**	99	85	84	110	77
Uganda	**100**	104	43	90	101	104
Venezuela, RB	**101**	81	72	115	90	107
Bangladesh	**102**	93	99	91	106	90
Burkina Faso	**103**	118	65	85	109	54
Mozambique	**104**	100	42	96	112	97
Honduras	**105**	105	75	108	91	100
Ethiopia	**106**	107	96	104	98	83
Lebanon	**107**	88	114	107	102	95
Guatemala	**108**	108	95	111	81	108
Pakistan	**109**	112	117	98	105	56
Zambia	**110**	96	35	88	111	120
Nigeria	**111**	111	76	87	113	105
Myanmar	**112**	89	68	114	103	111
Zimbabwe	**113**	92	38	110	114	117
Iraq	**114**	79	119	117	96	91
Cameroon	**115**	117	78	101	99	112
Mali	**116**	110	90	94	118	116
Guinea	**117**	113	61	113	116	113
Haiti	**118**	120	118	119	104	119
Afghanistan	**119**	116	120	118	119	118
Yemen, Rep	**120**	119	110	120	120	115

Recommendations

The Global Wellbeing and Resilience Index (GWRI) can be used by a range of stakeholders to make informed decisions, design targeted interventions and enhance collaborative efforts to improve the wellbeing and resilience of populations, especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings. The recommendations aim to address the multiple challenges highlighted by the GWRI: promote gender equality, improve health outcomes, protect the environment, improve livelihoods and support countries affected by conflict. Intersectoral and collaborative efforts are essential to achieve progress.

Governments

- **Focus on closing the livelihoods gap by addressing the following challenges.** Reduce the proportion of the population who lives in urban slums (49% LMICs vs 2% in HICs), and tackle poverty. Increase rates of completion in tertiary education: HICs record twice the completion rates LMICs. Improve financial literacy and access to financial services: 69% of people in HICs can save money and 49% have access to a bank account, compared to 43% and 13% in LMICs, respectively. Widen social protection coverage: HICs reach 78% of the population in need, compared to LMICs' 31% average coverage; food safety programmes in HICs achieve complete coverage, compared to LMICs' 59%. Tackle the NEET problem: in LMICs, 24% of youth are not in employment, education or training (NEET), versus 12% in HICs. More girls are NEET than boys everywhere. All countries should address the NEET issue, though LMICs face a bigger challenge. Improve access to accommodation services for people with disabilities: LMICs record 50% access, one-third less than HICs, which record 76%.

- **Improve the environmental performance of countries by addressing the following challenges:** Improve the protection of endangered species (current coverage: 60% HIC vs 30% LMICs). Reduce soil pollution: (HICs 69% vs LMICs 53%). Renew efforts and investments in policies and regulations: though LMICs lag behind HICs (11% vs 67%; and 41% vs 69%), both groups need to increase efforts toward a net zero economy and toward implementing regulations for energy efficiency.

- **Implement policies and programmes to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and promote gender equality.** Invest more resources in the collection of disaggregated wellbeing and resilience-related data, including by sex and age, at a minimum. Invest in improving girls' access to, and completion of, school. Improve access to the labour market for women. Address local barriers to labour market participation. Integrate GBV survivor services into mainstream sexual and reproductive services and collect systematic data on these.

- **Focus on improving potential causes of fragility to improve wellbeing and reduce the risk of conflict.** These areas include governments' capacities to raise tax revenue, their willingness to share resources across the political spectrum and redistribute resource rents equitably.

- **For conflict-affected countries:** prioritise the protection of civilians, especially vulnerable groups during and post-conflict; invest in rebuilding healthcare infrastructure and providing essential services; and promote inclusive governance and reconciliation efforts to facilitate the transition to peace and stability.

International Institutions

- **Provide technical assistance to governments** with weak statistical offices to support the regular production of wellbeing statistics and reduce the amount of missing data.

- **Promote an increase in technical assistance to fragile settings** to foster long-term institutional quality and government capacity.

Civil Society and Service Providers

- **Identify and work to change harmful gender norms** (For example, men have more right to a job, it's ok to hit your wife, girls should not go to school) that perpetuate intimate partner violence, conflict-related violence, discrimination, and gender inequality across all settings.

- **Provide gender-sensitive health and support services** including mental health support, reproductive and sexual health services, substance abuse services, and disability-aware services.

- **Collaborate with governments and international institutions** to improve healthcare access, especially in conflict-affected and rural areas.

Researchers

- **Further investigate the causes of fragility and its consequences for for societal wellbeing.**

- **Develop and validate measurement tools** that reflect local understandings of wellbeing, and the understanding of marginalised populations.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit: https://thegenderhub.com/stories/research-methodologies-for-women-peace-security-and-health/

PROJECT PROFILE

9.4 Innovative Methodologies and Methodological Innovation

Hub Members

Dr Alba Rosa Boer Cueva, UNSW Sydney

Dr Keshab Giri, University of St Andrews

Dr Caitlin Hamilton, University of Sydney

Jihyun Kim, University of Sydney

Professor Laura J. Shepherd, University of Sydney

About the Project

This research explores the understanding and utility of innovative methodologies among researchers and research communities with a particular emphasis on critical reflexive approaches to research and fieldwork and a focus on research generated within the Hub. In doing so, the project examined the Hub's feminist ethics, including how they shape the research, members' experience of enacting the Hub's ethics, and to what extent the Hub upheld them during sustained and compounding crises.

The research project also conducted two sets of surveys with Hub researchers, one in 2020 and a follow-up in 2023, to learn more about their research methods and understanding of innovative methodologies. Overall, the intention was to establish what we can learn from this five-year collaborative and collective research experience to shape decolonial feminist ethics and the politics of research moving forward.

Key Findings

- **Hub Members use a wide range of traditional and innovative research methods.** Hub Members understand innovation in research methods to involve conducting research in a context-specific and considerate way or by using creative research practices in a challenging environment. Many Hub projects report using more than one method or mixed methods, producing a diverse range of types of data including textual, audio, survey, tabular, visual, fabric, quantitative and archival.

- **Researchers' understanding of research methods.** Many Hub Members note that their thinking on research methods has changed over the course of the Hub, with an emphasis on finding the value and difficulties of practicing feminist research ethics in contexts of crisis and conflict. Hub Members share that they have become more aware of safeguarding strategies, feminist ethics and conducting collaborative research.

- **Reflexivity is essential to research.** Hub researchers emphasise that methodology, like research itself, is inseparable from how we want to be in the world and the kinds of worlds that we want to build through the knowledge that we cultivate.

- **Research is relational and community is central to the work.** People and relationships are the foundation of research, whether those are people that are living and working and having experiences that we want to learn more about; people that have written scholarship that has changed our understanding; or whether it is the people whose work will follow ours, and who will draw on the work we do.

- **Crisis moments test the Hub's feminist approach and show mixed results.** The Hub has faced sustained and compounding crises over five years, including budget cuts, COVID-19, and the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan. These crises deeply impact the Hub and its researchers and test the extent to which feminist ethics could inform decision-making in practice. For example, the Hub's feminist ethics should enable its researchers to be attuned to hierarchies and the uneven distribution of power – but the data shows that this was not always the case.

- **There are multiple definitions of feminism, and multiple ways of doing feminist research. This can create tension and challenges**. Reflections from Hub researchers show that there is no agreement on what feminism means within the Hub. The lack of a shared understanding of feminism from the start of the Hub was a point of tension that presented persistent challenges in how the Hub could or should enact feminist principles and ethics.

> **"**
> What matters is the relationships that you build and how you nurture and sustain those through times of crisis. That alone really will determine what is the shape of the organisation you're left with when the dust settles. **"**
>
> PROFESSOR LAURA J. SHEPHERD

Recommendations

Researchers

- **Research methods must be grounded in an understanding that knowledge cultivation is always a collective act.** Research needs to be designed and undertaken in collaboration with the communities it seeks to serve, and researchers must recognise knowledge generation as a collective process. This challenges traditional and individualist approaches to academic research and changes the way we think about knowledge cultivation and kinship as essential to research practices and field work.

- **Build long-term relationships rooted in reflexivity.** Ethical research takes time, care and attention to one's positionality. There is a need to challenge short-term journalistic methodologies, rapid ethnography and extractivist approaches to research. Feminist research requires an effort to cultivate long-term research relationships, to being embedded in and with the communities being researched and to thinking reflexively about our position within them.

- **Critically assess your research motives and the value you and your research bring to those it is about.** There is a massive amount of research in conflict and crisis-affected contexts, and many communities most directly impacted are over-researched. Researchers should ask themselves repeatedly: is my presence in this space absolutely needed? What is this research going to do for the people whose time and lives I am attempting to commodify for professional gain?

- **The implementation of feminist principles within large-scale research projects requires significant planning, resources, and commitment and a collective understanding of what feminism means.** The consistent application of feminist principles in large-scale research projects requires anticipation of the challenges of doing such work. Being ready to respond to challenges that exclude, invisiblise or subjugate certain communities is essential.

- **Practice loving accountability. Feminist research requires a willingness to hold ourselves to account when we are not living up to the research ethics and ideals that guide our work.** Researchers need to be able to call people in and to have a vocabulary for encouraging people to be reflective, to work in community and to nurture relationships.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit: https://thegenderhub.com/stories/innovative-methodologies-and-methodological-innovation/

PROJECT PROFILE

9.5 **Narrating (In)Security**

Hub Members

**Professor Neloufer de Mel,
International Centre for
Ethnic Studies**

**Dr Visakesa
Chandrasekaram,
International Centre for
Ethnic Studies**

**Ruhanie Perera,
International Centre for
Ethnic Studies**

**Ranitha Gnanarajah,
Independent Researcher**

About the Project

Through art-based approaches, this project seeks to illuminate and understand the many ways in which the Sri Lankan civil war (lasting from 1983-2009) affected women and continues to impact on their lives, their social and political relations, and their communities. Using applied theatre and videography, the project engages with a group of Tamil women living in Batticaloa, in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka whose lives have been affected by the conflict. They adopt a creative and critical process of crafting, reflecting and sharing their individual and collective experiences surrounding issues of identity, memory and trauma in war.

In total, five women participants and five theatre facilitators participated in workshops that took place over the course of two years using storytelling, image theatre and playback theatre exercises as part of the creative process. This work has led to the development of the video installation "Now You Must Bear Witness" and a film essay titled "Journey", which have been shared with the women and local audiences in Colombo and Jaffna and been selected for the Sheffield Documentary Festival 2024.

The workshop performances, installation and film essay created through this process-centred project hold an archive of narratives authored by the women. They provide evidence of the power of theatre as a medium to reveal the human condition (structures of power, inclusion and exclusion) in the midst of conflict in ways that expand our understanding of gender justice and security. Furthermore, the project seeks to show the distinct value of arts-based approaches in bringing theory and practice together to support collaborative storytelling and inquiry.

Key Reflections

- **Arts-based research methods can be applicable to a wide range of participants and participant needs.** Arts-based research methods, like applied theatre, are designed to work with diverse groups, including those with or without a wide range of artistic experiences and backgrounds. None of the participants in this project were professional artists, but everyone resonated with and contributes to the process.

- **The process of arts-based research is just as, if not more, important than the product of the research.** Arts-based research is a journey rather than an end goal. Careful planning, and the willingness and ability to adapt in response to the participants and the process are both essential to this work.

> " We used movement, and sometimes the journey was just walking from one side of the room to another. But you were almost tracing the course of a particular event or a particular moment in your life, and you worked with that emotion, or you walked with that weight. "

PROFESSOR NELOUFER DE MEL

- **Ethics, safeguarding and permission seeking are essential to this work.** Ethics is central to the research process and is instrumental in the decision-making on how the women's stories are told and how they emerge. In this sense, the ethical decisions in the structures that sit around a project are integral to the process. The ethical and safeguarding process requires continual adaptation and takes new shapes and forms in response to the participants' needs and aspirations. Thus, ethical considerations are a constant negotiation with ourselves, our practice, and principles.

- **Active listening and witnessing are key components to the storytelling process.** Active listening and witnessing are key components to the storytelling process. The creative process works through pairing a participant and facilitator for the storytelling process. This means that two people are in dialogue together, supporting each other. As such, when a particular type of story is being shared, of personal pain for example, an active witnessing begins through the presence of the facilitator and is extended through the space of the workshop and the practice of storytelling. Building a context of trust and witnessing requires the facilitators to actively listen in the first instance, and then for the interpreters to retell the story as a creative exercise. This principle of active listening is transferred through the facilitators into their performances, which acts almost as a gift that the witness gives back to the storyteller through their performance.

- **Working with strategic arts-based partners creates new opportunities.** Choosing to work with arts-based facilitators from the Suriya Women's Development Centre in Batticaloa is central to the process. Working closely with the facilitators in advance and working through dynamics and relationships in a workshop space, enables the facilitators to really thrive in partnership with the women participants. They are able to support them in being co-creators that lead and drive the artistic process.

> " It was both permission seeking, but it is also collaborative storytelling because the participant told the story, it was interpreted, permission was sought, but then there was also a collaboration that took place. "
>
> PROFESSOR NELOUFER DE MEL

- **Playback theatre is a vital method.** Playback theatre, an applied theatre approach where participants share a story from their lives and then the facilitator interprets and enacts it back to them, is integral to the storytelling process. This method gives space to the women to author their story, and for it to be re-authored thereafter in a process where the story is being constantly negotiated. This approach allows for the centring of permission and enables a more organic and horizontal process that is testament to both ethical and collaborative storytelling.

- **No theatre process is absolutely democratic.** Whilst using applied theatre and arts methodologies can be participatory in nature, it can still never be fully democratic. Once the data and stories have been gathered, the project team still fundamentally shapes and develops a structure for how the stories are shared and have the final word on what the end product looks like. This is an added layer to storytelling, and one that researchers should always be aware of. Representation is ultimately an act of power, but it can still be done with the utmost care and reflexivity

> " On the last day we were bidding each other goodbye and one of the women tapped me and said, but "you're not done, we are not done yet", and then she pointed and said, "now this is your story". "
>
> PROFESSOR NELOUFER DE MEL

Recommendations

Researchers and Academics

- **Mainstream arts-based research methods in conflict-affected contexts.** Researchers working in conflict-affected contexts can use the arts to facilitate spaces for survivors to come together, share and process their experiences and learn from one another. The arts can help create an intimate space for learning amongst participants and researchers, particularly as it relates to complex issues of identity, trauma and memory in violent contexts. Academics and researchers should work to make the arts a mainstream methodology, rather than 'fringe work' or an 'extracurricular activity' that pushes this impactful approach to the sidelines.

- **Arts-based methods should commit to participatory research that centres ethics.** Arts-based approaches should be trauma-informed and centre ethics at all points of the research process. This requires careful pre-planning and strategic partnerships and consideration of how to share the artistic works created in ways that respect participants' concerns and on-going safety considerations. This is of utmost importance in conflict-affected contexts and when working with marginalised groups. Grounding the work in a participatory approach that creates space for dialogue with participants about these decisions, and for participants to feel ownership in the process is a key way to engage with these challenges.

Donor and Funders

- **Acknowledge and support arts-based methods and research and value this in funding decisions.** The arts are more than an add-on or extracurricular activity, they can be a powerful process of learning, data collection and research communication and dissemination that impact new and larger audiences inside and beyond academia.

- **The process is just as important as the output.** Acknowledge the importance of the research process in funding guidelines, budget allocation and reporting requirements. The process through which research is designed and conducted should be given the same value as the output itself.

Policymakers

- **Arts-based research can provide distinct insights to inform policy interventions.** The process of arts-based storytelling and testimony in post-conflict contexts should and can relay back key narratives from those most directly affected by the conflict to inform policy decisions. Policymakers should actively engage with these kinds of projects and actively listen to bear witness to lived experiences through policymaking.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:
https://thegenderhub.com/stories/narrating-insecurity/
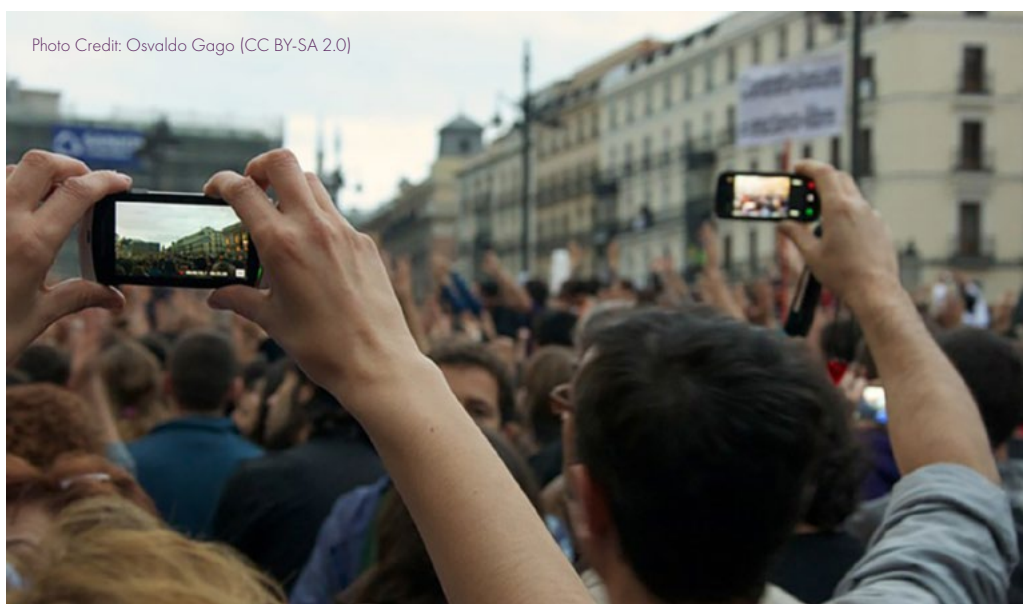
9.6 Rights Research with Social Media

Hub Members

Professor Kirsten Ainley, Australian National University

Dr Geoff Dancy, University of Toronto

Claire Wilmot, London School of Economics and Political Science

Photo Credit: Osvaldo Gago (CC BY-SA 2.0)

About the Project

This research examines the characteristics and implications of backlash to transitional and gender justice, particularly as expressed on social media. The project aimed to improve understandings of the relationship between social media and backlash among social media companies and relevant international institutions. However, the data required for the project proved impossible to obtain due to the restrictions Twitter, in particular, imposed on the information it would make available to researchers.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit: https://thegenderhub.com/stories/ rights-research-with-social-media/

9.7 **The Stories of Research**

Hub Members

**Dr William W. McInerney,
London School of Economics
and Political Science**

**Nicky Armstrong, London
School of Economics and
Political Science**

**Dr Evelyn Pauls, London
School of Economics and
Political Science / Berghof
Foundation**

Video

Story of the Hub in Colombia

https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=Ba9qFphoPFE&t=2s&ab_
channel=Gender%2CJusticeand
SecurityHub

Photo Credit: Nicky Armstrong

About the Project

The Stories of Research is a research project critically examining feminist participatory methodologies. This research looks specifically at one innovative participatory process conducted within the Gender, Justice and Security Hub called 'The Story of the Hub'. As members of the Hub, the three project Co-Investigators conducted participatory workshops, interviews, and digital storytelling methods with the Hub's 150 researchers over three years. The collaboratively created outputs tell the story of each project as well as the collective insights that emerged from across all projects.

Rather than focusing on the substance of those outputs, this research project turns the magnifying glass around to critically examine the feminist participatory process used to create and disseminate them. To do so, the project uses a series of story circles to elicit reflexive dialogue amongst the researchers to examine their experiences of designing, implementing, and evaluating the Story of the Hub methodology. This reflexivity and critical awareness of process and delivery creates space for reflections on the connections between the epistemic violence inherent in the unjust and violent structures and contexts in which the Hub's work took place, namely the interlocking impacts of patriarchy, colonialism capitalism, and militarism, and the often (un)intended continuation of this epistemic violence in traditional research practices and communication.

Overall, the project aims to interrogate and illuminate an innovative participatory methodology designed by the researchers and implemented for the Hub. In doing so, the project seeks to uncover the potential benefits, challenges, and risks of this methodology, and others like it, and to distil key lessons learned that might support new ways of designing, conducting, and communicating feminist research.

To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit: https://thegenderhub.com/stories/the-stories-of-research/#main
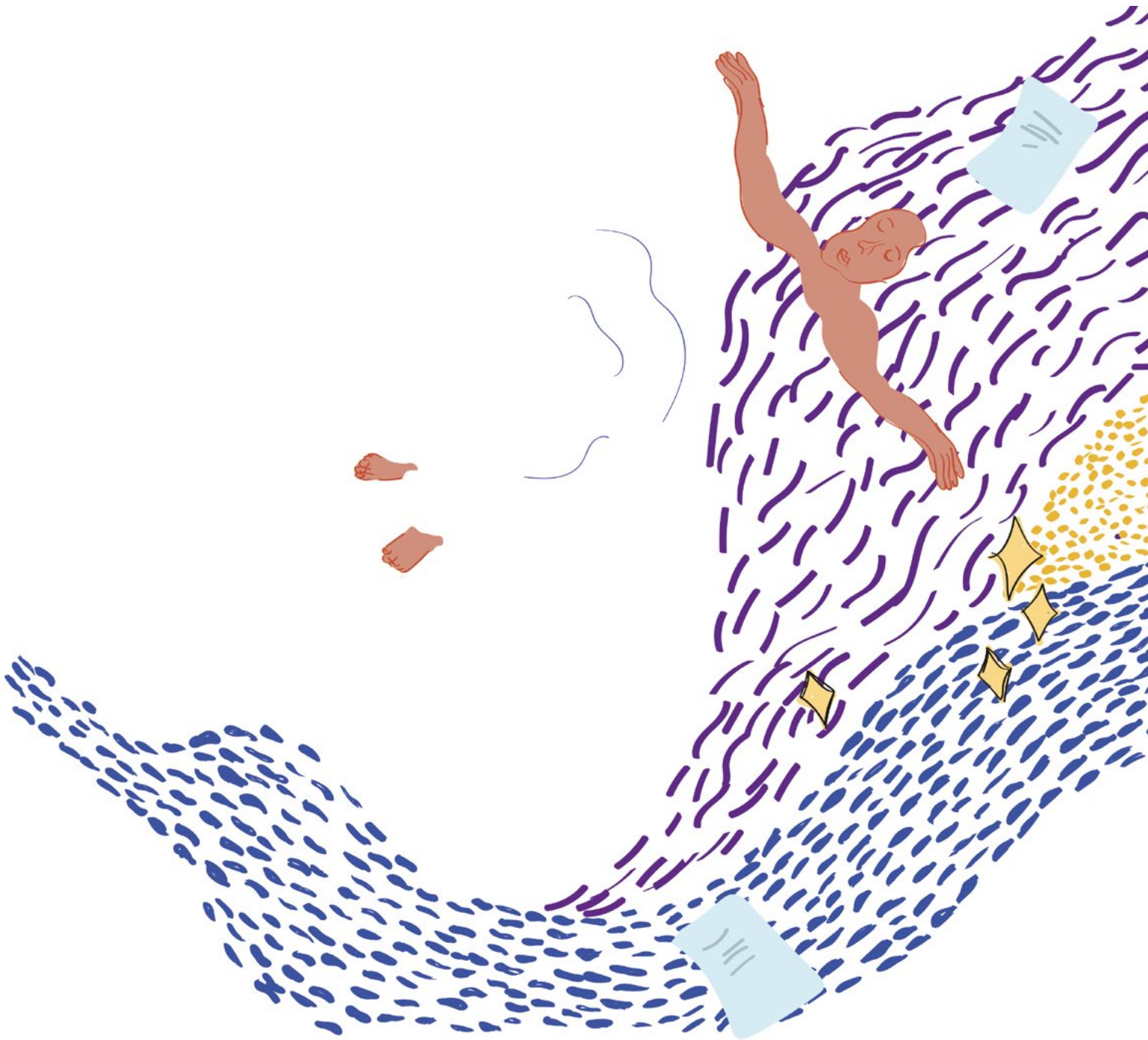
03

New Ways Forward

Section Three: New Ways Forward

This Section of the Report explores the overall reflections and recommendations emerging from the Hub. It It comprises three chapters that focus on the new ways forward for scholars, practitioners, law and policymakers and activists working towards gender justice and inclusive peace.

First, Chapter Ten explores the Hub itself as a model for change – unpacking how its interdisciplinary, transnational, and collaborative feminist praxis can support advances in addressing the interdependent intractable challenges outlined in Section One and further illuminated by Hub research in Section Two. This chapter conceptualises the Hub as a complex and evolving collection of relationships and explores the advantages, weaknesses, challenges, and risks of its feminist model, practices and ethics. This chapter translates the Hub's innovative approach into a set of reflections and recommendations that might help inform future researchers seeking to engage feminist ethics while researching gender, justice and security.

Second, Chapter Eleven explores the Hub's overall vision and calls to action for a radically transformed future. Drawing on insights from Hub members, this chapter outlines both what these new futures might look like and how we work towards achieving them through new mindsets, processes, language, and institutions. The chapter concludes with a set of Hub-wide reflections and country-specific calls to action.

Finally, Chapter Twelve concludes the Report with a short summary and reflections on the Hub's impact and legacy.

What is the Hub?

Weaving Webs and Navigating Friction in a Large-Scale Feminist Research and Advocacy Network

10.1 Introduction

Amid resurgent and politically emboldened 'anti-gender' movements around the world,[1] and specifically within institutions of learning and higher education,[2] feminist research ethics and praxis are needed now more than ever. This moment requires expansive feminist epistemological horizons to upend myopic epistemicidal logics; feminist research methods to destabilise the drive to quantify that which cannot be counted; feminist research networks to break down silos, build bridges across lines of difference and amplify the voices of those most marginalised; and feminist visionary thinking to illuminate blueprints for change.[3] This Chapter examines the lessons feminist researchers and advocates can learn from the Hub's large-scale transnational, interdisciplinary, multi-partner approach. It does so by engaging a reflexivity lens and asking – what is the Hub? While Section Two examines the Hub's research findings at the project, theme and country levels, this chapter zooms out to look at the Hub-wide level. It turns the magnifying glass around to examine the Hub itself, specifically looking at Hub members' experiences of interacting with one another in the network and their perceptions of the Hub's feminist approach.

Reflexivity is a core component of feminist work that facilitates an examination and disruption of binary and hierarchical relationships between researchers and research participants.[4] Research reflexivity, distinct from reflection and simply looking back on what one has done,[5] entails a critical examination of

positionalities, practices and the research process itself at an individual and institutional level, with particular focus on the ways in which power operates in and through research.[6] Within the context of a large-scale project with 150 members, this chapter extends the reflexive gaze to draw attention to how partners interact with, learn from and treat one another. In doing so it examines the Hub as a potent and imperfect feminist web of relationships, collaborations, potentialities, points of friction and multi-directional exchanges of knowledge, practice and solidarity.

Large-scale feminist research projects like the Hub, which comprises 38 distinct projects and project teams, are rare and present new opportunities, challenges and risks that warrant critical examination. This chapter does not seek to promote the Hub model as a template for others to follow but rather, it examines the Hub as a case study that shows the possibilities and pitfalls of feminist-informed gender, justice and security research in the face of the violent status quo.

As noted in Chapter One, this chapter draws specifically on Story of the Hub workshops that were run at the Hub-wide Convention in Colombia. Hub members were asked: what is the Hub? and were invited to reflect on their personal experiences as a part of the network. Members discussed their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the Hub's feminist research model and practices.[7] The findings complement and build upon research within the Hub, grappling with similar questions about feminist leadership and decolonial and feminist fieldwork praxis.[8]

10.2 Reflections on the Hub

Reflecting on the nature of the Hub, members employed a range of metaphors, describing it variously as a web, a bridge, a processing centre, a network of roads, a tapestry, a tree and an ecosystem. These metaphors were launching points for discussion animated through visualisations showing the structures, focus points, strengths, weaknesses and relationships within the Hub. The first and foremost finding from the workshops is that there is no singular conceptualisation – no single story of the Hub. Rather the Hub is understood by those working within it as an organic and adapting set of relationships full of impact, potential and friction. This chapter explores multiple viewpoints on the Hub as different ways of looking at and making sense of those relationships. The next two sections share findings on members' deliberations on the strengths and weaknesses of the Hub's model and practices.

Group drawings and notes from Hub Convention workshop in Colombia.

Strengths of the Hub

Insights from Hub members on the perceived strengths of the Hub model focused first on its overall feminist ethos. Hub members valued the many ways that feminism imbued the Hub's research practice including in its ethics, research topics, methods and vision. The Hub's Ethics Code included seven principles: feminist ethics, responsibility and accountability, integrity, intellectual freedom and research independence, equality of respect and opportunity, collegiality and sustainability.[9] Principle 1, on Feminist Ethics, was drafted by the Hub's Executive Group prior to the Hub's work beginning, and all institutional partners on the Hub were required to sign up to the full Ethics Code as part of their Collaboration Agreements with the Lead Partner, LSE.

UKRI GCRF Gender, Justice and Security Hub Ethics Code

Principle 1: Feminist Ethics

In order to uphold our commitment to a feminist ethics, we will:

1.1 Be attentive to, and work towards overcoming, power inequalities and inequitable gender dynamics within and among Hub participants and Collaborating Partners.

1.2 Build equitable partnerships between organisations working within the Hub.

1.3 Adhere to the highest ethical standards in our research design and practice, knowledge production, knowledge dissemination, impact and capacity building work. This includes being attentive to risks to ourselves and others arising from our work on the Hub and using the Hub's safeguarding principles and policy, risk register and risk management process to mitigate risks.

1.4 Seek to ensure equitable access to resources, opportunities and prestige across the Hub.

1.5 Develop cooperative, collaborative, inclusive and, as far as possible, transparent decision-making processes, applying policies and procedures which have been made available to those they are applied to, and recording a clear rationale for important decisions. The commitment to transparency should be balanced against rights to privacy and confidentiality.

1.6 Communicate in ways that are positive and respectful, that promote or support the participation of people whose voices are often marginalised and that allow a diversity of points of view to be expressed.

1.7 Support healthy work-life balance, career development and capacity building for Hub participants.

1.8 Engage in open and honest discussion about concerns or difficulties as soon as possible after they arise.

1.9 Practice regular critical self-reflection and remain open and accountable to feedback from Hub participants and the Advisory Board.

1.10 Monitor our practices according to our ethics as well as our objectives.

The commitment to a feminist ethics does not align the Hub or its participants to any particular understanding of feminism or what it means to be feminist, nor does it assume that different understandings can necessarily be reconciled or overcome.

This feminist ethical foundation created a rare space; in the words of one Hub member 'there is no equivalent space [like this] in academia.' Hub members also said they felt these feminist ethics helped to make the Hub a space of inclusivity and equity along South-North and East-West lines. They also underpinned attempts to erode the boundaries between Hub members, for instance, those frequently arising between professional service staff and academics, scholars and practitioners.

Members also valued what was described as the Hub's feminist learning approach within and across the projects. One Hub member noted that the 'exchange and interaction with Hub members has opened floodgates of new learning.' Another recounted that 'the spark of continuing my education is being reborn.' Echoing bell hooks' 'engaged' feminist praxis,[10] this learning was described as: rooted in women and marginalised groups' lived experiences; cognitive and embodied; personal and political; academic and activist-oriented; intergenerational; transnational; interdisciplinary; and involving critical and reflexive approaches. Intra-Hub learning was termed 'a challenging experience, in a constructive way. Forcing reflections on how we do research, thinking and teaching in a way that reflects feminist ethics and a commitment to change.'

Hub-wide strategies to support intra-Hub collaboration and the development of a Hub-wide community included: shared central Hub communication platforms like Microsoft Teams; the global Hub Conventions; a Hub Exchange Scheme allowing members to visit and work at other partner organisations; cross-project sub-groups such as the Early Career Network (ECN) and the International MICA team (management, impact, communications and administrative staff); and the cross-project collaborations, 'Collective Output Projects'.[11] These strategies contributed to the description of the Hub as a space for community-building – connecting the global and the local and bridging gaps amongst research disciplines and across scholar-practitioner-activist divides. One Hub member asserted their pleasure in being 'now a part of a web of interconnections. I see myself as powerful through linking up with others in the Hub.' These initiatives helped build a relational architecture where Hub colleagues not only worked together, but also supported one another, engaged in mentorship and developed personal friendships. As one Hub member said, 'I loved my experience at the Hub, especially the new networks and friendships' and another noted that 'it has been amazing to form personal connections with so many people dealing with similar issues.'

These relational findings point to another key theme around the Hub as a site of care and solidarity. Hub members noted that the Hub facilitated a research process that centred support and advocacy for one another and that prioritised safety for all involved, especially during moments of conflict and crisis. One member noted the 'extraordinary solidarity through multiple crises.' This commitment to active care for one another created a space that was described by multiple members as non-judgmental, supportive and safe. This was particularly noted by members of the ECN, who described a deep, shared solidarity, and by Hub members in relation to the MICA team. Multiple members expressed appreciation for the 'MICA team's commitment to feminist praxis in spite of incredible pressure and obstacles' and especially in relation to the work done to support colleagues in Afghanistan.

Another key theme that emerged was that Hub members valued the creativity and adaptability of the Hub's research approach. Hub members spoke about the benefits of integrating art throughout the Hub's shared activities, research and outputs. The Hub's embracing of art and creativity contributed, in the words of one member, to the 'erasure of [the] boundaries between arts, research, practice, and policy.' This was also perceived as being connected to the Hub's ability to adapt to challenges, to find creative solutions in the face of the pandemic and budget cuts,[12] and to embrace the non-linearity of the research process.

The Hub was appreciated for its size and the access it provided to financial and institutional resources. Hub members emphasised the value of the Hub's collective visibility and the amplified advocacy and impact resulting from being a part of such a large research project. The Hub was described by several members as a turning point in their careers and a deeply impactful experience. It was summed up by one member as 'a beacon for past, present, and future endeavours, impacting personal and professional lives.'

Weaknesses of the Hub

Hub members also identified weaknesses of the Hub, which highlight distinct challenges. The most significant insight was that of feminist tensions within the Hub – including around foundational feminist ethics and ideas. These were not universally agreed upon because, as one Hub member said, 'there are very different ways "gender" and "feminist ethics" can be thought of on [an] individual/institutional level.' The Hub's Ethics Code clarified that 'The commitment to a feminist ethics does not align the Hub or its participants to any particular understanding of feminism or what it means to be feminist, nor does it assume that different understandings can necessarily be reconciled or overcome.' While not calling for a singular definition of feminism, in reflecting on their experiences, Hub members noted that there could and should have been more dialogue to support a shared vocabulary and understanding of what feminism meant and looked like to different members in their distinct contexts before the research started. There were also questions and concerns raised about the priorities and beneficiaries of the Hub: whose voices were most consistently heard within the network and who benefited most from the research and the Hub's activities?

These tensions were particularly noted by members on issues of hierarchies and privilege within the Hub. As one Hub member said, 'Often the hierarchies we try to challenge on the outside/in our research end up being replicated and reproduced with our research groups/spaces.' Hub members noted the 'iron law of oligarchy' emerging within the Hub, whereby knowledge and power hierarchies reified over time in part due to the vastly different levels of privilege and access Hub members had according to class, geographic, institutional and seniority cleavages. These concerns point to implementation gaps – failures to translate intent into impact – between the Hub's stated feminist ethics and the messier realities of its operations in practice. While these critiques were substantially fewer than the positives shared above and were also mitigated by recognising that their negative impacts were 'not intentional' or 'ill-intended', these findings present an important contrasting perspective. They expose how some members experienced the Hub differently from others as well as points of contradiction and friction within the Hub.

Lastly, there were also organisational challenges related to the Hub's scale and scope, which at times made communication, engagement, monitoring and evaluation and relationship-building challenging. Despite community and connection being one of the top overarching ambitions of the Hub, this sentiment was not universally felt. As one Hub member expressed, 'We worked quite alone – [it was] difficult to feel a part of the Hub and fully participate.' Other Hub members described a frustration with their lack of knowledge about what was happening within the Hub at times, noting that the 'relationship between the projects and the "centre" [was] not clearly defined' and that the lack of communication within some of the Hub's streams was a real missed opportunity for more collaborative work and comparative analysis. Further, the Hub's five-year time frame meant that there were often members coming and going as they moved on to new jobs or their life circumstances changed. The Hub did not have adequate policies and systems of support in place to introduce new members to the Hub or to properly integrate them within the Hub's network.

10.3 Web Weaving Holistic Feminist Research

These findings draw attention to points of resonance and dissonance, strong positives shared by the majority of Hub members who participated in these workshops, but important and insightful critiques and inconsistencies also brought to light. This section discusses two overall reflections around the importance of: 1) weaving webs and a holistic feminist research approach; and 2) anticipating and engaging friction.

First, the wicked thicket of challenges impeding gender justice requires holistic approaches. The problems the Hub sought to address are interdependent and intractable. As Patricia Hill Collins[13] warns, we face matrices of domination. Thus, our approaches to resistance in and through research must also be dynamically integrated and interlocking. In reflecting on what the Hub is, researchers were drawn to the idea of webs. Feminist and Peace Studies scholars have long employed the metaphor of webs when talking about disciplinary boundary-breaking and social change. Donna Haraway calls our attention to a *cat's cradle* approach to knowledge production[14] and John Paul Lederach has argued for web weaving peacebuilding, embracing simultaneous and synchronised approaches – not sequential and compartmentalised ones.[15] In this light, the Hub offers a glimpse of feminist research as web weaving praxis.

The web is scaffolded and strengthened by transnational perspectives, inter-disciplinary insights and multi-partner, multi-sector collaborations that include and go beyond the walls of the academy to ensure research is informed by and accountable to those it impacts. It is reinforced by an intersectional feminist approach throughout. But the Hub makes clear that web weaving praxis must be grounded in reflexivity and an interrogation of power through the web itself. The web is ultimately held together by this reflexive relational architecture. The strength of connections with each other can make the web whole or peppered in holes. The Hub helped make visible the ways in which those connections are bolstered, tested and, at times, torn. Webs are both powerful and deeply fragile.

Thus, it is only when we build webs across disciplines, nation-state lines, academic-practitioner divides that we are able to confront the nexus of patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism and militarism. As Tooba Syed recently critiqued, feminist movements remain divided by silos and we must confront a 'crisis of imagination' that is inhibiting the development of transnational solidarity.[16] However, this does not mean you have to wait for a multi-million-pound research grant to do the work holistically at this scale – we must find strategic ways to acknowledge the needs for a broader and more collaborative research framework while also working with the resources available. Web weaving can and must be done at all sizes and within all timelines and other constraints.

Hub members' insights indicate the value of a whole-of-research or holistic application of feminism to the research web, from the bottom up and from design to dissemination. Feminist ethics combined with a pluralistic feminist epistemological position created the space for feminism to show up in a multiplicity of places within the Hub – for the Hub itself to be akin to a feminist web-weaving ecosystem. This does not mean that the lesson is either to explicitly integrate feminism throughout every element of a project or not to do it at all. Pushing back on such binary framings, the Hub is an imperfect example of an attempt to integrate feminism as much as possible while acknowledging the structurally violent, epistemologically narrow and, in some cases, explicitly anti-feminist contexts in which the work takes place, which produce material risks for those naming and enacting feminist research as such. One way the Hub sought to reflect upon its web weaving and holistic feminist approach was through the Gender Hubcast, a podcast created through a Collective Output Project.

COLLECTIVE OUTPUT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

The Gender Hubcast

Tanya Bhat; Michelle Callander; Alan Keenan; Chloé Lewis; Claire Wright

The Gender Hubcast provides an innovative platform for Gender, Justice and Security Hub members to reflect on feminist practice, knowledge production and ethics in the study and practice of peacebuilding. Hub projects revealed a range of methods and practices that are questioning – and sometimes disrupting – orthodoxies of researching (in) conflict. Hub members sometimes adopt methods that deliberately seek to challenge conventional approaches, seeking new, more elastic modes of research, accounting for and taking seriously the ethics, responsibilities and obligations of those who fund research that exposes participants to different levels of risk. Crucially, the Hubcast offers a unique space for shared reflection and learning on the opportunities, challenges, constraints and lessons accrued while driving an academically rigorous, policy-relevant and feminist-led multi-country research Hub.

To create this series, the Hubcast team invited Hub members to propose episodes based on their research and practice interests. Selected members then identified episode hosts and contributors to collaboratively develop the questions that guided the conversation. Each episode was recorded remotely and online (via Zoom). Written transcripts of the conversations were produced using software – Descript – allowing podcast hosts and guests to review and edit their contributions as needed. Hiring a podcast producer elevated the professionalism of the Hubcast, which sits proudly alongside established podcasts on Spotify, Apple and other platforms.

In this first Gender Hubcast series, academics and practitioners curate conversations reflecting on a range of themes, perspectives and experiences relating to their time on the Hub. The first episode, hosted by Kirsten Ainley and featuring Hub members Marsha Henry, Choman Hardi and Keshab Giri, explores the messiness of fieldwork through feminist lenses. It focuses on both the advantages and challenges that arise from incorporating feminist perspectives within research and international studies and beyond, highlighting the potential of feminist fieldwork to foster ethical knowledge production and contribute to a fairer global society. In the second episode, members of the Early Career

Credit: Claire Harrison, West 9 Design

Network share incisive reflections on what it means to be an early career member of the Hub, while navigating South-North relationships in feminist research, and the localisation of care responsibilities across different academic institutions.

The following three episodes centre on the Hub's work in Afghanistan. Structured chronologically around three distinct time periods, these conversations recount the team's experience adapting to a rapidly changing security landscape and spotlight the challenges that arise practising feminist research *in extremis*. In future episodes, contributors explore experiences of holding space for and producing knowledge with persons of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) as part of feminist research in conflict settings. Hub members also reflect on methodological innovations in curating the story of the Gender, Justice and Security Hub, reflecting on the extraordinary journey of the collective, the participatory work of telling this story and its lasting legacy. Our hope is that this inaugural series of the Hubcast will launch an innovative platform for important conversations to be sustained into the future.

10.4 Anticipating and Navigating Friction

A second reflection from Hub members is the need to anticipate and navigate friction. In striving to conduct large-scale feminist research within the context of non-feminist institutions and a wider anti-feminist cultural and political context, the Hub encountered extensive resistance and external shocks. Hub members experienced not only persistent interlocking forms of structural violence, but also a series of contemporary crises. This included the COVID-19 pandemic, austerity and political dysfunction within the UK – which resulted in the Hub being suddenly defunded and projects cancelled, only to be subsequently refunded at short notice – and country-specific conflicts, such as the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan and the subsequent evacuation of Hub researchers, their partners and their families. There has also been the global gender backlash – a phrase that, while popular, fails to properly describe the scope, temporality and trajectory of a set of severe, pervasive and sustained anti-feminist movements. Doing feminist research in this particular moment is challenging and, in some contexts, dangerous. Hub members' insights point towards the necessity for feminist researchers to proactively anticipate and navigate external challenges and resistance. Such preparations entail the investment of time, funding and expertise in project and risk management, and specific analysis of the existing power dynamics and relationships between the project/s, institution/s, funder and the communities most directly affected.

It also means centring a feminist ethics of care and the safety of all involved in the research process. For example, the visibility of the work must constantly be weighed against the vulnerabilities such visibility magnifies and the ways in which risk is disproportionately borne by those who are already marginalised. In large-scale transnational work, the intra-network association with other researchers on different projects and topics must also be considered. Risk assessments must grapple not just with individual projects but with the effects of collective association. In some contexts, being part of a collective can facilitate forms of protection through association, while in others it can do the opposite and can be weaponised against researchers. This issue was particularly present in the Hub around LGBTIQ+ rights and research – an essential component of gender justice research and one that was both actively advanced in some Hub focus countries and explicitly illegal to discuss and support in others. Further, safety in conflict- and crisis-affected contexts is always in flux and must be meticulously and iteratively assessed and practices adapted. New laws and changes in political leadership during the Hub directly impacted members' personal safety and project plans.

These sorts of external challenges require what several Hub members described as feminist friendship. Roua Al Taweel examines this idea of Hub feminist and dissident friendship as a practice grounded in active political solidarity, not pleasantries. She writes:

> *To be a true ally is to be a friend, solidarity is an act of collective friendship that is not necessarily, although it can be, personalised. It is relational, reciprocal and transformative of hegemonic and dominance conventions. Solidarity is not, and should not be, performed as a charity or an act of supremacy; it involves the recognition of individual and collective responsibility in preventing, responding to and protecting one another from violations and injustice.*

Read more of Roua's insights in the Hub Voices spotlight on the next page.

External friction also entails knowing your institution and context, and indeed the ethical challenge of compromise. This work requires navigating the contradictions of doing feminist work in non- or anti-feminist institutions, with research funding bodies seeking the depoliticisation of research, and of being funded by states entangled in and responsible for historic and contemporary colonial and racist violence. These frictions require individual and institutional reflexivity and accountability,[17] grappling with the ethics and strategies of compromise and contradiction,[18] while simultaneously questioning the colonial logics and post-structural violence of research itself.[19] Work on this scale requires the allocation of time and resources. Indeed, the WPS agenda and SDGs have been mired in debates between reform and revolution: the ethics and efficacy of compromising and working within the system versus seeking systemic transformation from the outset.[20]

As Tania Saeed and Julia Paulson[21] discuss in their reflections on a similar, although smaller scale, UKRI research project, reflexivity is not enough. This work requires active engagement with the boundaries and possibilities of complicity within a feminist ethic. In accepting UKRI funding and working within non- and anti-feminist institutions and contexts, the Hub engaged in a series of compromises that it sought to navigate through its feminist ethics in order to bring about a more constructive complicity.[22] These internal discussions and external negotiations were a constant feature of the Hub. While anticipated in the development of the Hub, members of the Executive Group reflected that in hindsight they underestimated the amount of time and the emotional toll this work would take, and the persistent resistance they would face. face.

Hub Voices   Roua Al Taweel

Embroidering Solidarity Through Grief and Dissident Friendships

I write this short contribution during the fourth month of the widely publicised annihilation campaign against Palestinians in Gaza. While silence seems more fitting for profound grief, words maintain significance amidst the colonial pro-genocide propaganda manufactured in Europe. The piece aims to capture key aspects of the global anticolonial and ceasefire solidarities, reflecting intersectional feminist ethics of care and transformative justice, akin to those upheld by the Hub.

Insofar as the recent months have caused distress, they have sparked unique transnational solidarities underlining important conditions to maintain momentum. These manifest in 'the ways we connect and are connected across constraints,' from divisive political structures to spatial and temporal borders, echoing the politics of friendship, a dissident friendship.

 Instead of intimidating dissidence, Western pervasive censorship, wielded by governments, corporate media and (academic) institutions, ignited a *solid* solidarity; one free from co-option and self-serving agendas. The acts of silencing and punishment directed at Palestinians and their friends in the West highlighted their potent influence in disrupting the colonial project. Combined with pathetic

gaslighting, this has inadvertently led many, especially among critical Gen Z, to engage with decolonial inquiries, fostering vital self- and collective education.

Not only was the annihilation campaign – a durée of colonial genocidal violence – predictable (and therefore preventable), but so too was the West's response, a playbook well deciphered by decolonial scholars. Using the broken logic of absolving guilt for past atrocities, like the Holocaust, by committing new ones, Western governments have consistently obstructed ceasefire efforts and actively provided Israel with political, legal, financial and military support.

The unmistakable embodiment of state-sponsored violence laid bare the systemic rule-by-law and illustrated the ways in which international law, by design, serves as a promise of violence, with powerful nations weaponizing exceptions and selective interpretation to maintain dominance. The preoccupation with evidentiary lens, within prevailing political hierarchies of sources, constitutes one of many other forms of justice that perpetuate epistemic violence and contribute to a global state of paralysis. Certainly, these stand in a stark contrast to the commitment to '*Never again*' for all, as well as the urgency advocated by the global campaign for a ceasefire and the end of settler colonialism.

Hence, keeping focused on what really matters, refusing to engage with distractions or to submit to intimidation and acting with urgency constitute the foundation of friendship-based solidarity politics. And this is achievable primarily through practicing humility, self-reflection and self-accountability, key values in feminist ethics of engagement.

As Israel continues to conflate Zionism with Judaism, anti- and non-Zionist Jews distance themselves by making a notable presence and voicing support for Palestinian rights to historical Palestine. The backlash they face exposes what Hagar Kotef describes as 'the contradiction of the combination of Jewish and democratic... [as] once one becomes too democratic (in full solidarity with the Palestinians) she or he ceases to be a Jew from the point of view of the regime and its violence'. Jewish solidarity represents a form of transnational analytic of care which foregrounds the complex interplay of local and global processes that perpetuate inequalities and vulnerabilities, while avoiding defensiveness, reactivity and silencing. In this sense, it ensures that one's own victimisation does not blind them to the harm they may inflict on others. The outcome is 'webs of care', expressed by a Jewish activist, shared among both Jews and non-Jews mobilising against violence.

Any thoughtful individual understands that annihilation is not a path to reconciliation or durable peace in Palestine or the broader Levant, nor is passive 'co-existence' that normalises colonial violence. Instead, a practice of 'co-resistance' formed by Palestinians and anti-apartheid Jews, as advocated by Tamer Nafar, a member of the Palestinian hip-hop group Dam, seems more appropriate. Drawing parallels with the Black Lives Matter movement, co-resistance refocuses attention to those directly affected by the colonial violence. In essence, such a process requires us also to be prepared to pose difficult questions and confront difficult information about our complicity in unjust systems – be it active or passive, affective, discursive, or operational. It entails listening to, trusting and respecting the expertise of Palestinians in their struggle.

This has significant implications in the realm of knowledge legitimacy and epistemic justice. The West's prolonged debates over whether Palestinian children's lives matter or are worth saving reveals its moral depravity and prejudice, rendering it unfit to lecture anyone about human rights or democracy. The people in Palestine and their friends have zero care to how the West's governments, media or people characterise the situation. For that rhetoric stands no chance, and weighs very little, against the lived experiences and profound expertise of those surviving annihilating geopolitics.

In addition to epistemic justice through self-critique and centring marginalised voices, solidarity demands concrete action. This has been demonstrated by those who have, officially or privately, persistently protested, exposed and refuted propaganda, organised teach ins, documented violations for legal actions, celebrated resistance, grieved with and created safe, affective and intellectual spaces for the Palestinians.

It has also demonstrated when states effectively take on the responsibility to protect and enforce the rule-of-law, as exemplified by South Africa and Namibia. Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh, the Irish lawyer representing South Africa's genocide case against Israel, powerfully points out that '[South Africa] has done what it could. It is doing what it can... and calls on this honourable court to do what is in its power to do.'

Against every stiff and unflattering dance of IDF soldiers over the destruction of Palestinian lives and homes, there are creative and compassionate expressions of solidarity emerging for Palestine, including through murals, poetry, protests posters and music. While Western media propagate, Palestinian journalists courageously risk their lives to keep us informed. Despite Israel's multi-million-dollar media campaigns, Palestinian solidarity continues to surge globally with zero budget, highlighting the colonial fragility in the face of the basic human compassion for frightened children, and natural inclination towards rightful resistance.

To conclude, to be a true ally is to be a friend. Solidarity is an act of collective friendship that is not necessarily, although it can be, personalised. It is relational, reciprocal and transformative of hegemonic and dominant conventions. Solidarity is not and should not be performed as a charity; it involves the recognition of individual and collective responsibility in preventing, responding to and protecting one another from violations and injustice. This post has explored some key forms of solidarity, offering guiding principles to identify true allies and shape strategies for global solidarity to address today's intersecting social, political, economic and environmental crises.

Further Reading:

Gandhi, Leela *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siecle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.

Halim Chowdhury, Elora and Liz Philipose (Eds), *Dissident Friendships: Feminism, Imperialism, and Transnational Solidarity.* Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2016.

O'Donoghue, Aoife. "Syria and Locating Tyranny, Hegemony and Anarchy in Contemporary International Law" *Jus Cogens* 2, no. 1 (2020): 29.

Kotef, Hagar. "Fragments" *Critical Inquiry 44*, no. 2 (2018): 343.

Burley, Shane. "Jewish Activists Mobilising Against War Are Finding a New Community." *New Lines Magazine*, 2024.

El-Kurd, Mohammed. "Jewish Settlers Stole My House. It's Not My Fault They're Jewish." Mondoweiss, reposted by *Jewish Voice for Labour*, 2024)

Jrere, Mahmood, Tamer Nafar and Udi Aloni. "We Don't Want What Happened in 1948 to Happen to Us Again." *The Nation*, 2021.

Any research project of this scale will inevitably encounter internal friction. Thus, feminist researchers must plan for this by investing in the development of a constructive conflict culture rooted in clear and collaboratively developed policies and support structures for addressing internal disagreements and disputes. Doing so requires tackling everyday interpersonal conflict, cross-cultural differences and a critical interrogation of what inclusion in Hub-wide activities means within the politics (and realities) of time zones, passports, bandwidth and monolinguistic epistemic violence.

It also means centring the project members' relationships with each other, creating a space where trust can be earned and where collaborative decision making can be practiced. It also requires a process for what Alba Rosa Boer Cueva and several Hub colleagues have called *loving accountability*.[23] As feminists and conflict transformation scholars have long-argued, friction can be a constructive force: a creative energy that illuminates challenges and reveals new possibilities. Indeed, a strength of feminist theory is being able to create and understand relationalities through and across lines of difference. An innovative example of how this work was done within the Hub emerged in the collective output project, Transformative Conversational Practice in Feminist Spaces. Early career and Global South Hub members used conversation circles to illuminate and interrogate some of these feminist tensions and in doing so created a space of web-weaving praxis, solidarity and support.

COLLECTIVE OUTPUT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Transformative Conversational Practice in Feminist Spaces: Early Career Network and Global South Perspectives

Alba Boer Cueva; Marianna Espinos Blasco; María Gabriela Vargas Parada; Roua Al Taweel; Luisa Salazar-Escalante; Sinduja Raja; Nicky Armstrong, Tanya Bhat; Julia Xavier Stier

With a foundation in intersectional feminist principles, the project aimed to create a transformative space within academia, emphasising the equal significance of the 'how' and 'why' of research, in relation to the 'what' is ultimately produced. This initiative unfolded over the course of a year through monthly online conversations involving early career researchers (ECRs) and practitioners within the Gender, Justice and Security Hub. Central to these conversation circles was a commitment to intentional, relational, connective and generative engagement.

The project yielded dual outcomes. Firstly, it provided a platform for participants to share experiences and reflections on the 'unhealthy' dynamics prevalent in research environments, fostering a network of peer support to combat senses of isolation and alienation. Secondly, the insights gained through these conversations contributed to knowledge production on aspects of organic and nurturing practice-based solidarity. Hence, the impact of the project extended beyond its temporal boundaries, fostering enduring connections among participants and culminating in various outputs, including a blog entry, podcast, journal article and conference participation. These outputs collectively explored conversation as a feminist method essential for transforming the rigid structures and hierarchies entrenched in academic spaces.

Among the issues addressed are the existing power dynamics between the global North and global South, ableism, gender disparities, professional hierarchies, precarious work conditions, inclusivity and accountability within feminist and/or academic spaces. Additionally, the project explored the impact of the prevalent emphasis on output over process, often sacrificing genuine positive relationships and the wellbeing of those involved and leading to mechanical productivity devoid of creativity and flexibility.

These themes highlighted the necessity for a transformative approach, specifically an organic and fluid conversational practice that facilitates an ongoing process of unlearning and relearning. By providing a space for introspection and self-reflection, free of judgement, the process has proved to deepen interest in and attachment to the project. It has become a platform for personal growth and connection with others, wherein participants confront their discomfort with silence, the urge to rush to fill it, as well as tendencies towards negation, defensiveness and avoidance of addressing expressions of unease or 'negative' feelings within the group. This journey also involved facing one's own inclinations towards self-control and policing.

The core of conversation lies in the dynamic of interaction, silence and diversity of experiences, working, thinking and relating – not only between thoughts but also in the evolution of thought itself as the conversation unfolds. There is also the creative chaos within conversation that enables connections and departures in non-hierarchical and non-prescriptive ways, with neither beginning nor end, which may be undermined by academic writing styles that can disavow anything personal or remotely emotive.

The pursuit of transformation, albeit imperfectly achieved, has diversified ways of thinking and creating outputs. Embracing imperfection liberates dialogue from the pressure of providing definitive answers. Disagreements and challenges are viewed as opportunities for growth. Importantly, by emphasising the collective nature of knowledge production and the significance of genuine engagement, the project underscored how transformative conversational practice rooted in feminist principles can challenge entrenched structures, foster meaningful inclusivity and cultivate solidarity within academic and professional spheres.

Photo Credit: Steve Johnson on Unspalsh

Feminist researchers must proactively anticipate and navigate these frictions because, as Hub members learned, friction will emerge and will be weaponised against feminist work. Feminist research, some of which is messy-by-design and nearly all of which is transgressive, risks being further delegitimised when even the slightest internal friction spills out into the open or when external friction causes decreased output production. Such bad faith attacks should not discourage taking an explicitly feminist framing to research, but they are a reality and must be anticipated and navigated in the current context.

Finally, it is worth emphasising that reflexivity remains at the core of both web weaving and navigating friction. Hub members shared examples of where reflexivity strengthened the Hub and of where it fell short and was needed. Such reflexivity requires work and accountability and as several Hub members have written, 'being aware of the need for reflexivity does not keep us from the risk of exploiting our interlocutors or the reality of our privilege and the profits we gain from our work'.[24] Intention matters, but it is impact that counts. Reflexivity cannot be turned into a talking point. It must be a system enacted and sustained individually and institutionally through planning, collective commitment and appropriate levels of funding.

10.5 Conclusion

Web weaving and anticipating and navigating external and internal frictions require sustained attention to the temporal dimensions of this work. In part because of the ubiquitous frictions, feminist research towards gender, justice and security is an intergenerational and non-linear process. We must plan our work accordingly, and we must, as multiple Hub members said, 'hold on.' Over the course of the Hub's five years, positive gains for women's rights and gender justice have been made. But there were also many leaps back. What does it mean if we end the Hub in a worse position for global gender justice and inclusive peace than when we started? Is this what success looks like in 2024 – holding on?

Taken together, these insights into the importance of web weaving and engaging friction provide a set of guiding reflections for feminist researchers holding on and trying to push forward, particularly for those seeking to develop large-scale research projects in this current context. The ideas shared here are not new; they permeate decolonial, intersectional and transnational feminist literatures. What is distinct here is the opportunity to see and grapple with them within a feminist research project of this size, at this specific moment in time, and to focus on how they are applied to the ways project members experience the project

itself and treat one another; indeed, it is a reminder that feminist research is not just about the work we do, it is about how we do it with one another. It is not just about doing different feminist research but doing feminist research differently.[25]

As Hilary Cremin and Terrence Bevington note, it is possible to create transformative moments without fully transforming institutions, even though we acknowledge the latter is the goal and only way to a sustainable, just future[26]. But within such deeply entrenched structures of violence, we must find heterotopic pockets of resistance, of feminist friendship, and of loving accountability to bring about such radical alternatives and to illuminate the paths towards them. Cremin and Bevington implore us to consider the night sky as a metaphor when considering lessons learned from projects like the Hub. The people of the Hub, the knowledge they share, the collective wisdom of this work are all points of light and 'the more stars, the brighter the night sky. The brighter the sky, the easier it is for travelers to find their way'.[27]

A Poetic Postscript

Over the course of the Hub's final year, Hub member William McInerney asked fellow researchers, practitioners and activists the question that this chapter started with: what is the Hub? The answers were scribbled down on the back of napkins, written in phone note apps and documented in interview transcripts. Inspired by the Hub's arts-integrated feminist research approach, it seems fitting to end the chapter with a creative collective reflection that brings Hub members' answers to the question together into a single multi-vocal poem. To be clear about the approach taken here, the words in the poem below are those of Hub members that have been mixed, fractured, stitched and mended together to create a *poetic mosaic*.[28] The poem brings the voices of Hub members into conversation with one another, revealing the resonances and dissonances in their individual and collective understandings of the Hub as a feminist web weaving project full of friction and possibility.

What is the Hub? Here is what Hub members said...

The hub is...

the hub is a grant

an opportunity

a multi-million-pound chance to do the work

of gender and justice

in a broken, unjust world

the hub is work

a lot of it

the hub is a network

a tapestry of 40 organisations braided across 24 countries and time zones

the hub is an international intergenerational bridge

from the past to the present

the present to the unknown

the hub is six research streams diverted into 38 tributaries

an ecosystem trying to bring about a radically transformed future that feels beyond our grasp

that may never well be

the hub is 150 people

a mosaic of life bending boundaries and disciplines

a cartographic atlas of lived experience

it is professional, political, personal

the hub is a community embedded

a platform and a home

the hub is built within the walls of academia but barrelling beyond the academic box

the hub is the liminal space between

the hub is ambidextrous

a clarion for justice and compromise for what we can get

the hub is a match lit from within trying to find a way out

it is surviving this world and trying to change it

the hub is an outstretched hand as the border closed

a voice of solidarity belted in the face of backlash

the hub is knowing that is important, and that's not enough

the hub is contradictions, inconsistency and conflict

the hub is everything we wanted and all the things we wished it wasn't

the hub is a web

powerful but vulnerable

cemented and fragile

funded and then un-funded

visionary but uncertain

transformative and deeply imperfect

the hub is a potentiality

a seed yet to fully lay its roots and bloom

the hub as a project will end, but the hub still is

still weaving its web within the shifting winds

still connecting our ideas, our tensions, our work and lives

a constellation of lights

friction into fire

just trying to hold on

the hub is

the hub is

the hub is us.

Endnotes

1   Judith Butler, *Who's Afraid of Gender?* (London: Allen Lane, 2024).

2   Charlotte Morris, Tamsin Hinton-Smith, Rosa Marvell and Kimberley Brayson, 'Gender back on the agenda in higher education: Perspectives of academic staff in a contemporary UK case study,' *Journal of Gender Studies* 31, no. 1 (2021): 101-113.

3   bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics,* (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

4   Kim V. L. England, 'Getting Personal: Reflexivity, Positionality, and Feminist Research,' *The Professional Geographer* 46, no. 1 (1994): 80–89.

5   Linda Finlay, 'Negotiating the Swamp: The Opportunity and Challenge of Reflexivity in Research Practice' *Qualitative Research* 2, no. 2 (2002): 209–230.

6   Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldberg, *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research,* (London: Sage Publications, 2000).

7   Data from the workshops included over 15,000 words of written notes and submissions from members. This text was thematically analysed and then shared back with members for further input in a follow-up workshop online.

8   See: Alba Rosa Boer Cueva, Keshab Giri, Caitlin Hamilton and Laura J. Shepherd, ' A Decolonial Feminist Politics of Fieldwork: Centering Community, Reflexivity, and Loving Accountability' *International Studies Review* 26, no. 1 (2024).; Alba Rosa Boer Cueva, 'Reflecting on Innovative Methods and Methodological Innovation across the Gender, Justice, and Security Hub,' (The Gender, Justice and Security Hub, 2023). https://thegenderhub.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Reflecting-on-Methodological-Innovation.pdf and Caitlin Hamilton, 'The UKRI GCRF Hub and Innovative Methods,' (The Gender, Justice and Security Hub, 2023). https://thegenderhub.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Methodology-Report_Hub.pdf

9   For a full copy of the Hub's ethics code, along with other key governance and organisational strategy documents, visit the Hub's website – www.TheGenderHub.com

10 bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom,* (New York: Routledge, 1994). See also by bell hooks: *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (2003) and *Teaching Critical Thinking Practical Wisdom* (2010).

11 See Chapter One for further details of these Hub strategies.

12 As described in Chapter Two.

13 Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1990).

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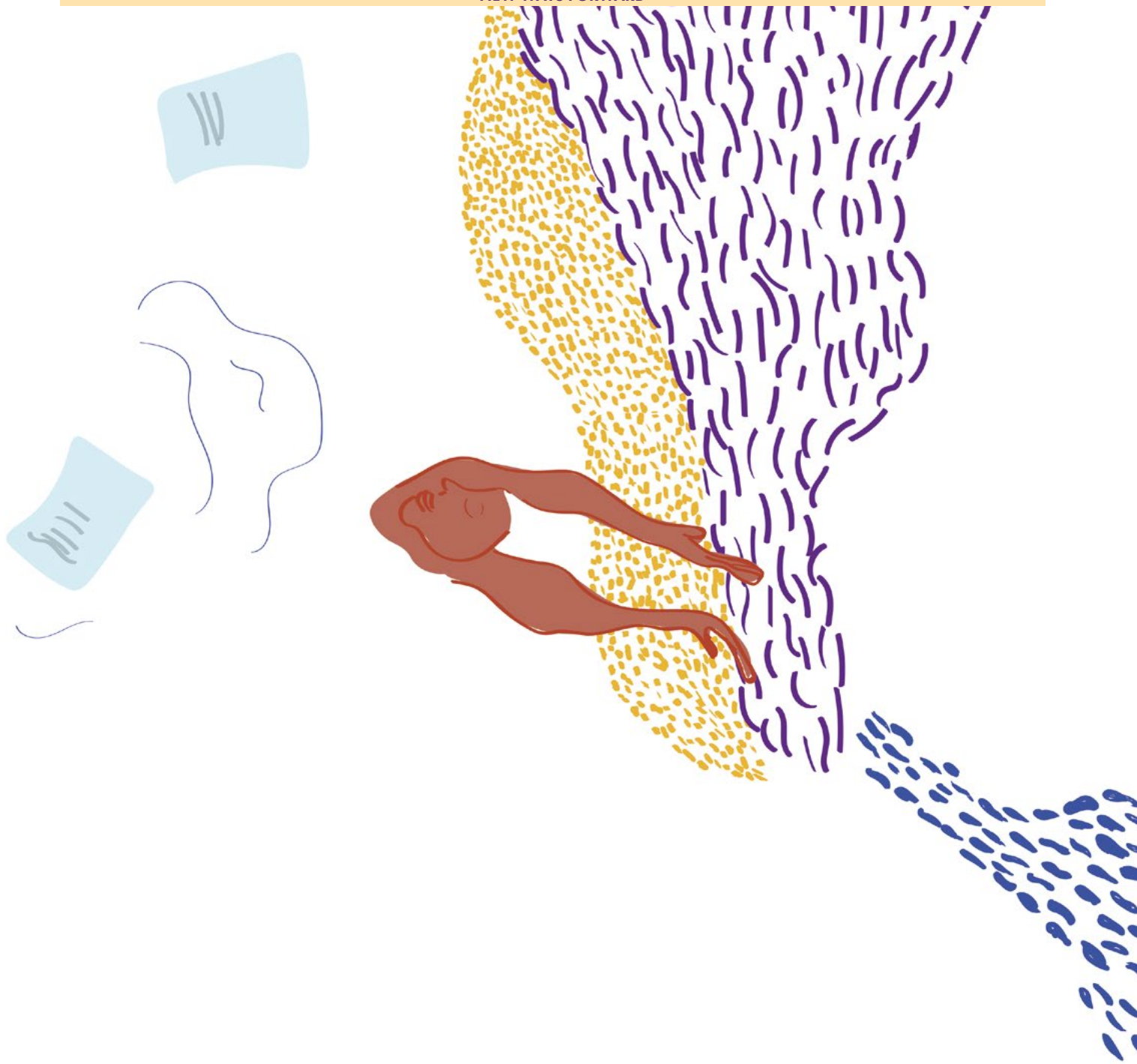
CHAPTER 11

Radically Transformed Futures for Gender Justice and Inclusive Peace

11.1 Introduction

At the Hub Convention in Northern Ireland in 2022, members began discussing the common themes, findings, recommendations and challenges from across their projects. One key idea that emerged from those sessions was the importance of not just critically documenting and analysing the violent status quo, but also conceptualising and illuminating a feminist path forward. As Ruha Benjamin writes, one must 'remember to imagine and craft the worlds you cannot live without, just as you dismantle the ones you cannot live within'.[1] In response to the severe, pervasive and systemic gender injustices and insecurities the Hub's research has documented and challenged, new futures are not a luxury or an exercise in hopeful thinking; they are a moral and political imperative. Drawing on a long lineage of visionary feminisms, utopian thought, and Afro- and Indigenous futurisms,[2] Hub members began imagining what 'radically transformed futures' for gender justice and inclusive peace might look like.

As in Chapters Two and Ten, this Chapter draws on participatory workshops run with Hub members during the Convention in Colombia in 2023. Participants were asked: what does a radically transformed future for gender justice and inclusive peace look like? How do we work towards that future? In short, what are the radically transformed futures and how do we get there? Drawing out the final question, Hub members were also asked: what overall reflections and recommendations can the Hub provide to support gender, justice and security work moving forward? Answers to

these questions were discussed in small circles and larger groups, and then shared in written responses. The collective responses were transcribed, thematically organised, and shared back with Hub members for further review and reflection.[3]

This Chapter is organised into three sections. First, the Chapter shares findings from the workshops in Colombia where Hub members described their visions for radically transformed futures. Hub members' reflections include an emphasis on gender-based rights, dignity, the absence of violence, economic/racial/decolonial justice, structural change, global movements for social change, strong laws and policies, inclusive peacebuilding, high levels of trust, equitable politics, freedom of expression and the importance of hope. Second, the chapter explores Hub-wide reflections on how scholars, practitioners, law and policymakers and activists might work toward these radically transformed futures. This Section shares nine principles that emerged from the Hub's collective work. While neither universal nor comprehensive of all the complex challenges facing gender, justice and inclusive peacebuilding work, these principles help illuminate paths towards radically transformed futures. Third, the Chapter complements the broad reflections on gender, justice and security with specific, targeted and context-focused findings and recommendations for each of the Hub's seven focus countries. These recommendations follow from the country context analysis and findings shared in Chapter Three and are synthesised from the Hub's research project findings and recommendations shared in Chapters Four to Nine.

11.2 Radically Transformed Futures

The word 'radical' comes from the Latin radix, meaning root. Radical as root connotes something fundamental or core. Radical transformation then is an attempt at addressing the root causes of an issue. As outlined in Chapter Two, the Hub's collective feminist analysis reveals the root causes of gender injustice and insecurity as interlocking forms of structural violence – patriarchy, capitalism, coloniality, and militarism – compounded by various forms of contemporary crises. A radical transformation requires therefore a radical rethinking and restructuring of this matrix of violence.[4] The friction stemming from how best to achieve that transformation and the pace at which it is done has sparked debates between various liberal, radical, Marxist, intersectional, and queer feminist approaches to social change. Hub members also expressed multiple perspectives on the need for both short-term iterative reform and long-term revolutionary transformation, balancing the need for change within the existing system whilst also working beyond its boundaries. The tactics of transformation draw attention to its temporality and the possibilities of the future. Radically transformed futures are an act of visionary feminist praxis – one grounded in the moral and strategic imperative of not just deconstructing the challenges of the present but actively reconstructing a new path forward.

Hub members chose the phrase 'radically transformed futures' intentionally to direct attention toward the need for structural change and to highlight the importance of feminist world-building. However, there are complexities, ambiguities and limitations to this phrase. While there is agreement on the need for structural change, how to bring about such transformation is contested and requires contextual flexibility. Further, what constitutes radical transformation? And who gets to decide what counts as radical? Is it radical to call for gender equality? Or gender and other equalities? What does it mean if our radical futures are simply the restoration or preservation of fundamental human rights?[5] And importantly, when are these radical futures coming? In a world marked by such severe, pervasive and systemic violence, many cannot wait for a future beyond their next breath. These questions and challenges animate the following sections' attempt to delineate what radically transformed futures might look like, and if and how the Hub's collective research can help illuminate a path towards it.

Radical Imaginings

Photo: Mohammad Aamir Ganaie

Workshop at Hub Colombia Convention

Hub members envisioned multiple forms of radically transformed, gender just futures. First and foremost, radically transformed futures must be places where everyone's basic needs are met and where there is no violence – including sexual and gender-based violence, transphobic or homophobic violence, as well as all forms of direct, cultural, and structural violence. A radically transformed future was envisaged as a place where violence-free families and communities are the norm. However, the absence of violence, or negative peace, is not sufficient. Radical futures must be spaces of positive peace rooted in altered mindsets, structural change and holistically mainstreamed gender justice.[6] This would include 'structurally and systemically addressing' the intractable challenges outlined in Chapter Two – patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism and militarism. As one Hub member said, in a radical future there is an 'erosion of patriarchy in the household, in laws, in societal attitudes and in the labour market'. In place of interlocking structural and cultural violence, radical futures are a place of gender, racial and decolonial justice.

Economic justice and economic independence for women are also key components of a radically transformed future to support women in empowering themselves. On an individual level, these structural changes create the conditions for robust gender-based rights and security, thriving livelihoods, interpersonal and intrapersonal peace, dignity, inclusion and a space where people can be and express themselves freely, including a sense of inner freedom to transgress gender norms and expectations. Healing and resilience will be central to a radical future, as will the power of the arts and cultural practices in supporting individual transformation and collective empowerment.

To bring about such a space of positive peace and social justice will require global and connected social and political movements enabling agents of change to forge transnational and intergenerational solidarities. There are powerful connections here to the findings in the previous Chapter on the value of web weaving within feminist research and practice. Radical futures will also require strong, gender-responsive laws and policies connected to livelihoods, land, health, economics, politics, education, environment and climate. Hub research across all six streams repeatedly stresses the essential role of law and policymaking in protecting and advancing human rights. Despite the contemporary challenges in upholding international law and states' resistance to law reform, gender justice requires rights-based codified protections and commitments alongside broader social justice systems grounded in an ethic of care. Hub project recommendations include that the disavowal and disintegration of the rule of law must be challenged and recast in a new direction going forward.

Hub research also underlines the importance of inclusive approaches to peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding in bringing about a radically transformed future. These approaches centre the agency of women, the perspectives of survivors and victims and working with local leaders and grassroots movements from the bottom-up, not just external actors and top-down directives. An inclusive approach to peace work and transitional justice must also be applied around the world including territories not always recognised as post-conflict, such as Northern Ireland.[7] Equitable participation and representation in peace work and local and regional community leadership and politics at all levels are also essential.

Hub Voices Quhramaana Kakar

Women's Agency and Resilience in Afghanistan – Post August 2021

Positive peace, particularly when it comes to acceptance of the rights of ordinary Afghans by the de facto authorities, is currently absent in Afghan society. Therefore, the current situation can be categorised as a paradigm of a highly gendered quasi-conflict. In other words, the deprivation of Afghans' basic human rights, particularly those of women, combined with the absence of a roadmap for transitional justice, and an inclusive reconciliation and reintegration process, may only lead to further uncertainty and yet another full-fledged civil war. The absence of a responsible state and a system that strives to protect the rights of its citizens in Afghanistan is seen as a collective failure of the Afghan leaders and the international community.

The compounded impact of multiple challenges that Afghan women face in Afghanistan today, ranges from severe restrictions imposed on them by the Taliban, to their long-term socio-economic deprivation and lack of equal opportunities – a situation that continues to worsen in the absence of a targeted and coherent approach to address these key issues impacting livelihoods and rights. Women's agency in the current political and security climate is proving very challenging and requires a deeper understanding of the issue and possibilities to address it.

Afghans, especially Afghan women, inside the country are not only demonstrating utmost resilience to the current situation but are also keen to lead the way through every possible avenue. They are integral to resolving the current problems and tackling the critical issues facing the country. Women's continuous agency is vital to bring about change. Over the past three years, we have witnessed that women's voices on Afghanistan have been the strongest – particularly outside the country. The strategic and innovative approaches of those inside the country have been the only hope for more than 50% of the population to maintain some level of presence in the socio-economic and services fields. The agency of women in Afghanistan arises from the everyday reality and demands, where they engage in a variety of ways, ranging from education and skills development to livelihoods and economic activity, and Peacebuilding through local level conflict resolution and mediation within families and communities. The protection, strengthening and expansion of these spaces is vitally important.

Women for Peace and Participation (WPP) works with women and youth in some of the most difficult regions of the country, where women and girls face additional layers of discrimination and exclusion. For example, WPP works in the southern region, the Taliban's historic foothold, and currently the seat of its top leadership and supreme commander. Women's mobility and activity in the region is highly restricted and much more discouraged compared to the rest of the country. There are very few opportunities for women to have a space where they can connect and remain engaged and thus relevant in the social affairs of the country. Some of these efforts are engineered by women through their innovative thinking and approaches, where livelihood and income generation has become central to empowerment and agency building and strengthening.

After the collapse of the republic, WPP, in its areas of operation, has been engaged in transforming its programmes to reflect the reality on the ground and address the needs of women and communities. This support goes beyond projects and programmes to also focus on addressing the human needs of women by supporting and strengthening their agency. The intent is to enhance solidarity and support aimed at their meaningful and sustainable engagement with the outside world – where their voices can be heard. Through this agency, emphasis is also put on addressing local conflicts, the protection of young girls and vulnerable women against social

and domestic violence and identifying opportunities for them to engage in economic and education opportunities.

WPP's experience with the Gender, Justice and Security Hub in the post-republic era has been based on cooperation and flexibility. The support that the Hub has extended to WPP has been highly beneficial in helping Afghan women to have a relatively conducive environment for their struggle to stay relevant and active in limited but important ways. Some of the lessons learnt from our engagement with women

and youth in Afghanistan include: a) the importance of listening to the people on the ground, and women in particular, b) designing support and response approaches together with them and taking their lead on navigating sensitivities and challenges, and c) strengthening the relevant connections and expanding the list of allies and collaborators within the country, the region and internationally. It is therefore cardinal to continue extending well-organised and coherent support to the Afghan people in these hard times.

Further Reading

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The last, but crucial, ingredients in radically transformed futures are joy and trust: an abundance of hope. As one Hub member said, in a radically transformed future, 'life would change. Dreams would change. Reason to live too will change. Perspective would change and the world would change.' Such a vision demands incremental change and reform where possible, but also, according to many Hub members, a commitment to abolitionist ideas of a world without war, prisons, borders and states. And while hope provides the blueprints for change, trust is the glue that holds the relational architecture together. Radical transformation requires high levels of trust between people and those who hold power over them, amongst states (while they still exist) and institutions, between donors and community organisations, and between people within the movements for change themselves.

In summary, the radically transformed futures, as we imagine them, are grounded in the principles of peace and non-violence, equity and justice, dignity and inclusion. Both reform-based and radical mechanisms can help to realise this future: the existence and, critically, implementation of robust rights-based laws and policies; transparent and accountable governance; abolitionism and solidarity-based community-building. Achievement of these goals could bring about a creative, joyous and optimistic future where gender justice and inclusive peace are not just glimpsed in partial and fragile spaces within the violent status quo, but fully embedded within a new feminist ecosystem.

Photo: Mohammad Aamir Ganaie

Workshop at Hub Colombia Convention

However, while common themes emerged in the ways Hub members think about a radically transformed future, there is no fully shared and singular aspirational future. Rather, there is a constellation of futures. Hub members differ in their visions for radically transformed futures because they are envisioned in response to different needs, contexts and approaches. This underlines the findings discussed in Chapter Ten on the importance of cultivating space for difference and friction within feminist work. For example, there is not a single idea of gender; nor is there a universal narrative of what sort of change feminism might or should bring about. While Hub members identified the challenges that emerge from multiple and sometimes conflicting understandings of feminist change, they also affirmed the importance of having shared space to engage productively with these differences: 'the commitment to a feminist ethics does not align the Hub or its participants to any particular understanding of feminism or what it means to be feminist, nor does it assume that different understandings can necessarily be reconciled or overcome'.[8]

11.3 Hub-Wide Reflections and Recommendations

Chapters Four through Nine shared reflections and recommendations from each of the Hub's six thematic and cross-cutting research streams – Transformation and Empowerment, Masculinities and Sexualities, Migration and Displacement, Livelihoods, Land and Rights, Law and Policy Frameworks and Methodological Innovation. Hub research shows that each of these areas of focus are essential to bringing about a radically transformed future. To support advancements towards that future, specific and targeted recommendations from each of the Hub's research projects have been developed. These recommendations speak to diverse challenges, geographies and potential solutions. They present a mosaic of next steps moving in multiple directions, not a linear or universal plan of action. Further, by bringing together diverse expertise and lived experience, and thus devising a synchronised, simultaneous and holistic approach to gender, justice and security research, the Hub's project recommendations, while context-specific and carefully tailored, can collectively be heard as a choir of calls to action. These calls provide clear, tangible and evidence-backed answers to the urgent question of how policy and lawmakers, civil society, activists, artists, faith leaders, educators, researchers and practitioners across various domains can help progress toward gender justice and inclusive peace. These recommendations can be seen as directions toward bell hooks' 'blueprints for change', towards a world grounded in visionary feminism [9]

Nine Principles for Gender, Justice and Security

This section adds to the blueprints for change key reflections inspired by the Hub's collective work. In one of the final Hub-wide workshops, Hub members worked together to outline a set of overall recommendations. The results echo the specific calls to action at the project, country, and thematic levels, including the two key points highlighted in Chapter Ten: weaving feminist webs and anticipating and navigating friction. Although, again, we do not unanimously agree on these recommendations in all contexts, they are important conversation starters and principles to illuminate the path forward towards radically transformed futures. Putting these ideas into action requires transparent, accountable and robust law and policy frameworks that are grounded in human rights, attuned to intersectional analysis of gender and social change, and motivated by a belief that a different world is not just needed, but is also possible.

1. Listen More

First and foremost, listen to those most affected by gender injustice and insecurity.

Centring the voices and lived experiences of women and marginalised groups must remain at the forefront of gender justice work. As one Hub member put it: 'listen to what people victimised by structures of oppression say they need rather than creating policy in their name'. Some Hub members called for a fifth WPS pillar[10] focused on centring women's agency and voices. Further, there is a need to listen to a spectrum of perspectives beyond the bubbles of existing gender justice networks and allies. This means engaging a broad range of private, public, charitable and academic sectors and working with religious, cultural, political and community leaders, while ensuring such engagements are inclusive and do not exclude women and marginalised groups. Hub members' research points to the value of listening to such perspectives and the necessity of building and sustaining these partnerships. While listening alone is insufficient, it is an important conduit towards a more inclusive peacebuilding process that centres the expertise and experience of those most affected and that invites a broad coalition of stakeholders into the process of social change.[11]

2. Keep Talking about Gender

Take gender seriously and keep bringing it up – personally, politically and professionally.

The Hub's cross-cutting stream on Law and Policy Frameworks highlighted that 'in many cases gender perspectives are still side-lined, gender-disaggregated data is not prioritised, and the assumption is that including women addresses the "gender dimension" of peace and justice processes'.[12] Intersectional gender analysis is needed at all levels of law and policymaking, in all research projects and within all activist movements. Raising gender can be disruptive. As one Hub member said, 'if you take gender seriously, disruption follows'. Hub research points to the necessity of such disruption and the generative role it can play in bringing about social and political change.

This is particularly important amid the rise of sustained and severe anti-feminist movements where gender has become weaponised and critical discourse about patriarchy silenced. Further, in an era of polycrises, attention and resources are being diverted away from feminist work to address a range of pressing social, health and economic issues, without integrating feminist and gender analysis throughout. The Hub was funded, defunded and eventually refunded over the course of five years as government budgets and priorities shifted in response to domestic and global events, and the perceived priority of funding work on gender that centres women's agency versus work on topics less threatening to patriarchy (like 'educating girls') waxed and waned. While global attention and resources must adapt to emergent threats, polycrises cannot be an excuse for defunding gender work. The emergent challenges share basic structural roots with the core issues of gender, justice and security. Gender must be put on the agenda where it is absent and must stay on the agenda, especially in times of compounding crises.

3. Name the Structural Problems

The violence of patriarchy, capitalism, coloniality and militarism must be named in the halls of power, because what goes unsaid all too often becomes uncontested and unquestioned.

Feminist scholarship has long advanced theoretical and practical insights on the ways in which language matters and how the stories we tell about social problems shape our social worlds and imaginaries; impacting the way we think and act. Addressing the intractable and interlocking structural violences of patriarchy, capitalism, coloniality and militarism requires both

a grammar of gender justice and the political will to name this violence directly.

For example, despite the clear and resounding calls to name and address militarism in the UN Women's Global Study in 2015 [13], as well as the continued work of NGOs like the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), no progress has been made. As detailed in Chapter Two, since the Global Study, militarism has worsened and expanded around the world. Hub research shows that militarism continues to constrain gender justice in both overt and brutal ways through armed violence and more covert campaigns to camouflage militaristic ideology within the WPS ecosystem. Moving towards radically transformed futures requires a clear-eyed understanding and vocal naming of both overt and covert manifestations of militarism. Naming the problem is a necessary, although not in itself sufficient, step in dismantling these systems of violence and advancing a more gender just and secure future.

4. Weave Feminist Webs

The intractable challenges of patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism and militarism are interdependent and interlocking. Approaches to addressing them must be intersectional, synchronised and holistic.

As the feminist scholar and poet Audre Lorde said, 'there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.' [14] The Hub's work underlines the need for 'multi-axis' or holistic feminist praxis and a 'web weaving' approach to research. These insights are applicable and necessary across all domains of gender, justice and security work. Web weaving entails a focus on connecting – bringing multiple perspectives and approaches together in research through intersectional analysis, transnational partnerships, interdisciplinary methods and multi-sector collaborations with scholars, practitioners, activists, and law and policymakers.

Multi-axis feminist praxis points to the value of a holistic application of feminist thinking and practice at each step of the research process, from the proposal development to the dissemination of findings, and the ways in which a feminist ethic of care and community building are vital. The relational architecture of such work is the binding that holds it all together. Web weaving and a holistic feminist approach to research must be further mainstreamed and integrated into funding priorities. It is both a testament to the UKRI Global Challenges Research Fund that it funded such a large-scale feminist research network, and disheartening to see that such funding no longer exists. There is significant work to be done in engaging with donors and funding bodies to ensure

lessons learned from large-scale gender justice projects like the Hub can be replicated at various scales moving forward.

5. Anticipate and Engage Friction

Feminist research requires the mitigation and prevention of external threats and challenges as well as constructive engagement with internal tensions and contradictions.

Conducting feminist research in this moment of backlash, crises and structural violence is challenging and even dangerous work. The experience of the Hub points towards the need for feminist researchers to proactively anticipate and navigate external challenges and resistance. To do so requires the investment of time, funding and expertise in project and risk management, and specific analysis of the existing power dynamics and relationships between projects, institutions, funders and communities directly affected. The Hub utilised a combination of ongoing risk assessment and Safeguarding and Crisis Impact Funds to support Hub members in response to both established and emerging risks and challenges.[15]

Feminist research also entails engagement with internal challenges by centring a feminist ethic of care, focusing on the importance of relationships, navigating compromise and resistance with loving accountability [16] and developing a constructive conflict culture. Through such actions the friction created by the challenges of this work can be mitigated, and in some instances, used as a constructive force: a creative energy that illuminates challenges and reveals new possibilities.

6. Centre Activism

Recognise and support feminist activism and place it at the heart of gender justice research, activism, law and policymaking.

Hub members call for the prioritisation, protection and funding of grassroots feminist activism. Inclusive peacebuilding requires simultaneous top-down and bottom-up approaches to social change and it is imperative that the latter is not minimised or delegitimised. Activists played a central role in the development of the SDGs and the adoption of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Gender justice social movements around the world must continue to have a meaningful seat at the table. To do so requires investment in local, national, and transnational community organising. Such roles must be seen as valued labour and as work that can be stable and sustainable for those involved.

7. Close Implementation Gaps and Fund the Work

Language matters, but action matters more.

We need a renewed focus on implementation of the existing gender justice and inclusive peace law and policy frameworks, including the SDGs and WPS agenda: 'we don't need more ideas or resolutions or speeches.' The answer is clear: we need 'implementation, implementation, implementation'. While this does not mean new laws and policies are not, or will not, be required, it does highlight the need for more attention to implementation of the existing legal and policy architecture first.

For example, the call for a fifth WPS pillar could be reconceptualised as the need for a horizontal reinforcement running across and strengthening the four existing WPS pillars by emphasising women's voices and agency throughout the WPS agenda. Further, implementing existing policies, laws and programmes requires more meaningful, sustainable and transparent funding. Hub research draws attention to the political dimensions of what work gets funded and the implementation gaps between funding rhetoric and reality. All too often, the rhetoric of gender justice from those in power fails to become reality through concrete policy implementation and targeted funding allocations.

Talking about gender justice is not enough. Tacitly supporting gender justice is not enough. Good intentions to enact gender justice are not enough. At a time of severe, pervasive, and systemic gender injustice and insecurity, action backed by robust and evaluated implementation plans and supported by sustainable and transparent funding must be the norm.

8. Incorporate the Arts and Culture

The arts and culture are vital components of gender, justice and security work and should be meaningfully integrated into projects, campaigns and theories of change.

While often relegated as side projects for self-identified artists or treated as peripheral cultural activities, Hub research points towards the arts and cultural practices as strategic components of gender justice that can be used to engage diverse audiences, including creative professionals and the broader public. Artistic and cultural approaches can be context-responsive and multidimensional ways to educate, analyse, process, heal, connect, express, disseminate, seek justice and advance social change. They can help critically interrogate the legacies of intersectional gendered violence, illuminate existing

intractable challenges and envision new radically transformed futures. The arts are necessary, not just an accessory.

9. Expand, Connect and Communicate the Evidence Base

More feminist research is needed, along with more gender-disaggregated data, equitable knowledge exchange partnerships and research communication strategies that are both effective and affective.

The Hub's 200+ publications (including books, journal articles, chapters, reports, indexes, poems, works of theatre, podcasts and films) have deepened and expanded the gender, justice and security evidence base. However, more research is urgently needed to address a wide range of key questions that have emerged through the Hub's work, as well as lingering gaps in the academic literature and emergent social, political and technological challenges. In particular, gender-disaggregated data remains an essential need. In addition to the need for more research, more work is needed to better connect existing knowledge, breaking down disciplinary silos and scholar-practitioner divides. This draws attention again to the importance of networks and web weaving – working across sector- and state boundaries to produce interdisciplinary, intersectional and transnational insights that build upon one another.

More connected knowledge must also be effectively and affectively communicated to a variety of stakeholders and audiences. The Hub's diverse collection of research outputs, emphasis on mixed methods, and traditional and arts-based research provides insights into how research communication can be reimagined in ways that are both analytic and affective, critical and creative. Doing so helps reach new and wider audiences and addresses the connections between the epistemic violence inherent in the unjust and violent structures and contexts in which the Hub's work takes place and the often-unintended continuation of this epistemic violence in traditional research practices and communication.

COLLECTIVE OUTPUT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Amani Gender, Justice and Security Resource Centre

Stephen Oola

One way the Hub is contributing to expanding, connecting and communicating the evidence base is through the Amani Gender, Justice and Security Resource Centre in Gulu, Uganda. The Resource Centre is a facility set up to document, curate and disseminate conflict, gender, peace, justice and security-related publications and artefacts. This project was conceived of as a one-stop centre to enhance access to gender, justice and security-related knowledge and to bridge knowledge gaps between the Global North and the Global South.

The project is hosted by the Amani Institute Uganda. It is based in Gulu City, northern Uganda, a region affected by more than two decades of violent armed conflict, which was waged by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) against the government of Yoweri Kaguta Museveni from 1986 to 2008. The project started with the renovation of the Amani office boardroom, which was turned into the Resource Centre space, followed by the installation of several bookshelves and reading facilities. Initial stocking of the facility was done by the Amani Institute, showcasing some of its previous works and research outputs over the years, including those produced in collaboration with Makerere University as part of the Hub. This was followed by a compilation of some of the Hub's publications and outputs accessible online.

Credit: Stephen Oola

Amani Gender, Justice and Security Resource Centre

There is no doubt that the Resource Centre will become one of the biggest ever collections of gender, justice and security related materials south of the Sahara. The space will also be used for exhibitions and symposiums on gender, justice and security-related issues, to bring policymakers, local government officials, researchers, students, lecturers, NGOs, CSOs, gender, justice and security-related practitioners, as well as local community members together around gender justice work, to influence policy discussions, debates and future research on gender, justice and security issues.

11.4 Calls to Action

The Hub's nine principles are generative, yet insufficient in themselves in bringing about radical, material change. The paths to transformed futures are found through transparent and accountable mechanisms for realisation and robust rights-based law and policy frameworks. Clear and tangible action steps, like the ones outlined in Section Two of this Report, are urgently needed.

- Chapter Three presents 65 country-specific findings and 70 recommendations tailored to the Hub's focus countries – Afghanistan, Colombia, Kurdistan-Iraq, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Uganda.

- Chapters Four through Nine highlight several hundred findings and recommendations organised through the Hub's six research streams – Transformation and Empowerment; Livelihood, Land and Rights; Masculinities and Sexualities; Migration and Displacement; Law and Policy Frameworks; and Methodological Innovation. The findings and recommendations are further specified within the 38 Project Profiles. These Chapters show how Hub research works at both micro and macro levels to provide compelling evidence and recommendations for enacting change.

When combined with the nine principles above, the Hub's mosaic of country, thematic, and project-based research findings and calls to action begin to tangibly demarcate the possibilities and pathways towards radically transformed futures in greater clarity and specificity. Country Briefs with context-specific action steps and Project Profiles with recommendations based on each project's findings are all available for download on the Hub's website.[17]

> **"**
> We need to focus on the present – not just the future – how can we mark the future when the present is so problematic?'. In the wake of global rights rollbacks and persistent gender violence, it is hard to think beyond the day-to-day struggles of livelihood and survival. **"**

11.5 Conclusion: Radical Futures Within and Beyond the Existing Law and Policy Architecture

There are contesting views within the Hub on the continued utility and importance of the SDG framework and the WPS agenda in bringing about a radically transformed future. As noted in Chapter Two, some Hub members argue for their continued relevance and others advocate discarding and reimagining them altogether. The SDGs and the WPS agenda played foundational but incomplete roles in advancing gender, justice and security but they have been challenged and compromised through entanglements with the nexus of militarism, patriarchy, capitalism, coloniality, and contemporary crises. In the face of this friction, the Hub's work reveals the value of a dual track path forward that uses these frameworks to strategically engage and advance gender justice now while also working for a radically transformed future beyond them.

The concept of non-reformist reforms is helpful here. Rather than simply reifying the status quo (reformist reforms), non-reformist reforms are those that challenge existing power structures, even whilst working within them.[18] Non-reformist reforms are a way of advancing a dual track approach to social change, utilising short-term strategic subversion within the current systems of power as well as advocacy and planning for long-term radical transformation. Such an approach balances the tensions between the future we want and the practical paths in front of us. This approach is vital when addressing questions around the temporality of radically transformed futures: when will such futures come about? How long must we wait? Who has the privilege of thinking about the future in a time of polycrisis now? As one Hub member noted, 'we need to focus on the present – not just the future – how can we mark the future when the present is so problematic?'. In the wake of global rights rollbacks and persistent gender violence, it is hard to think beyond the day-to-day struggles of livelihood and survival. While there are critical, and indeed strategic, benefits of envisioning futures and working for long-term sustainable structural change, that work must be complemented with a focus on 'what is possible now' too.

A dual track approach is needed because the work of bringing about a radically transformed future rooted in gender justice and inclusive peace is not close to being complete anywhere on the planet. None of the SDGs are on track, no WPS resolutions have been passed since 2019, and Hub research shows that in many contexts gender-based rights have regressed and gender-based violence has risen over the past five years since 2019. The opportunity for advancing gender justice comes in waves of social change and backlash – incremental progress, rapid deterioration, and moments of breakthrough. This temporality and nonlinearity of radical transformation draws attention to the importance of intergenerational solidarity and collaboration – the work for gender justice must live with and beyond us. To do so requires holding on.

Despite the specific compounding contemporary crises and reifications of structural violences outlined in this text, it is imperative to enact hope and patience, and to keep holding on to the cliff's edge amid severe, pervasive, and systemic anti-feminist resistance. Crises, such as the ones being faced now in 2024, can reveal cracks in the interlocking structural violences and bring opportunities for transformation. However, hope must be grounded in reality. bell hooks notes, 'to be truly visionary we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while simultaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality'.[19] The concept of transformative optimism, drawn from the field of critical pedagogy, is useful in this context. Building on the work of Paulo Freire, Cesar Augusto Rossatto defines transformative optimism as a reflexive, critical, and informed optimism that avoids the traps of pessimism, naïvety, and the reproduction of the status quo.[20] Transformative optimism is not wishful thinking; it is visionary work used as fuel for social change. The Hub's country level and project findings and calls to action, combined with the nine Hub principles for gender, justice and security provide insights on how best to hold on to hope and how to continue the vital work of advancing an alternative imaginary – a radically transformed future.

As Arundhati Roy famously wrote, 'Another world is not only possible, she's already on her way...on a quiet day I can hear her breathing.'[21] The work of the Hub, and countless other feminist practitioners, activists, and researchers makes clear that new world is needed now more than ever.

Endnotes

1   Ruha Bengamin, *Imagination: A Manifesto,* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2024).

2   See: Frances Bartkowski, *Feminist Utopias,* (London: University of Nebraska Press,1989).; bell hooks, 'Visionary Feminism' in *Feminism is for Everybody*: Passionate Politics, (London: Pluto Press, 2000).; Eleanor Drage, *The Planetary Humanism of European Women's Science Fiction: An Experience of the Impossible,* (London, Routledge, 2023).; Isiah Lavender and Lisa Yaszek (eds.), *Literary Afrofuturism in the Twenty-First Century,* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press. 2020).; Grace Dillon (ed.), *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction,* (Chicago: University of Arizona Press, 2012).

3   Thematic analysis was used following Braun and Clarke's six-step approach to constructing themes including: 1) become familiar with the data, 2) generate initial codes, 3) search for themes, 4) review themes, 5) define themes, 6) write-up; Victoria Braun and Virgina Clarke, 'Using thematic analysis in psychology,' *Qualitative research in psychology* 3, no 2 (1996): *77*-101.

4   Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1990).

5   The Universal Declaration on Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, is regarded by some as a radical instrument.

6   For a deeper exploration of negative and positive peace see Johan Galtung, 'Violence, peace, and peace research', *Journal of Peace Education* 6, no 3 (1969). For a gendered analysis of Galtung's peace work see Catia C. Confortini, 'Galtung, Violence, and Gender: The Case for a Peace Studies/Feminism Alliance,' *Peace and Change* 31, no. 3 (2006): 333–67.; William W. McInerney and David Tim Archer, 'Men's Violence Prevention and Peace Education: Drawing on Galtung to Explore the Plurality of Violence(s), Peace(s), and Masculinities' *Men and Masculinities* 26, no. 1 (2023): 69-90.

7   In its 5th National Action Plan on WPS the UK government highlighted 'UK expertise, from women peacebuilders in Northern Ireland' without expressly acknowledging Northern Ireland as a post-conflict community; UK Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023-2027 (February 2023).

8   The Hub's Code of Feminist Ethics.

9   bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics,* (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

10 In addition to the traditional four pillars of WPS: participation, protection, prevention and relief and recovery.

11 This recommendation aligns with the most recent resolution on WPS at the UN SC in 2019. Resolution 2467 argues explicitly for a 'survivor-centred approach' to WPS that listens to and follows the lead of those most directly affected by gender inequality and gender-based violence.

12 Kirsten Ainley and Laura J. Shepherd, 'Law and Policy Frameworks', Gender, Justice and Security Hub; see Chapter Eight.

13 Radhika Coomaraswamy, Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A global Stud on the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, UN Women (2015).

14 Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider,* (Ten Speed Press, 1984): 138.

15 Visit the Hub's website (www. thegenderhub.com) to see copies of the Hub's governance documents, ethics guidelines and organisational strategies.

16 Alba Rosa Boer Cueva, Keshab Giri, Caitlin Hamilton and Laura J. Shepherd, 'A Decolonial Feminist Politics of Fieldwork: Centering Community, Reflexivity, and Loving Accountability' *International Studies Review* 26, no. 1 (2024)

17 www.TheGenderHub.com

18 Patrick Bond, 'Reformist reforms, non-reformist reforms and global justice: activist, NGO and intellectual challenges in the World Social Forum.' In *The world and US social forums: a better world is possible and necessary,* (Brill, 2008): 155-172.

19 bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics,* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 110.

20 César Augusto Rossatto, *Engaging Paulo Freire's pedagogy of possibility: From blind to transformative optimism.* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).

21 Arundhati Roy, *War Talk,* (South End Press, 2003): *75.*
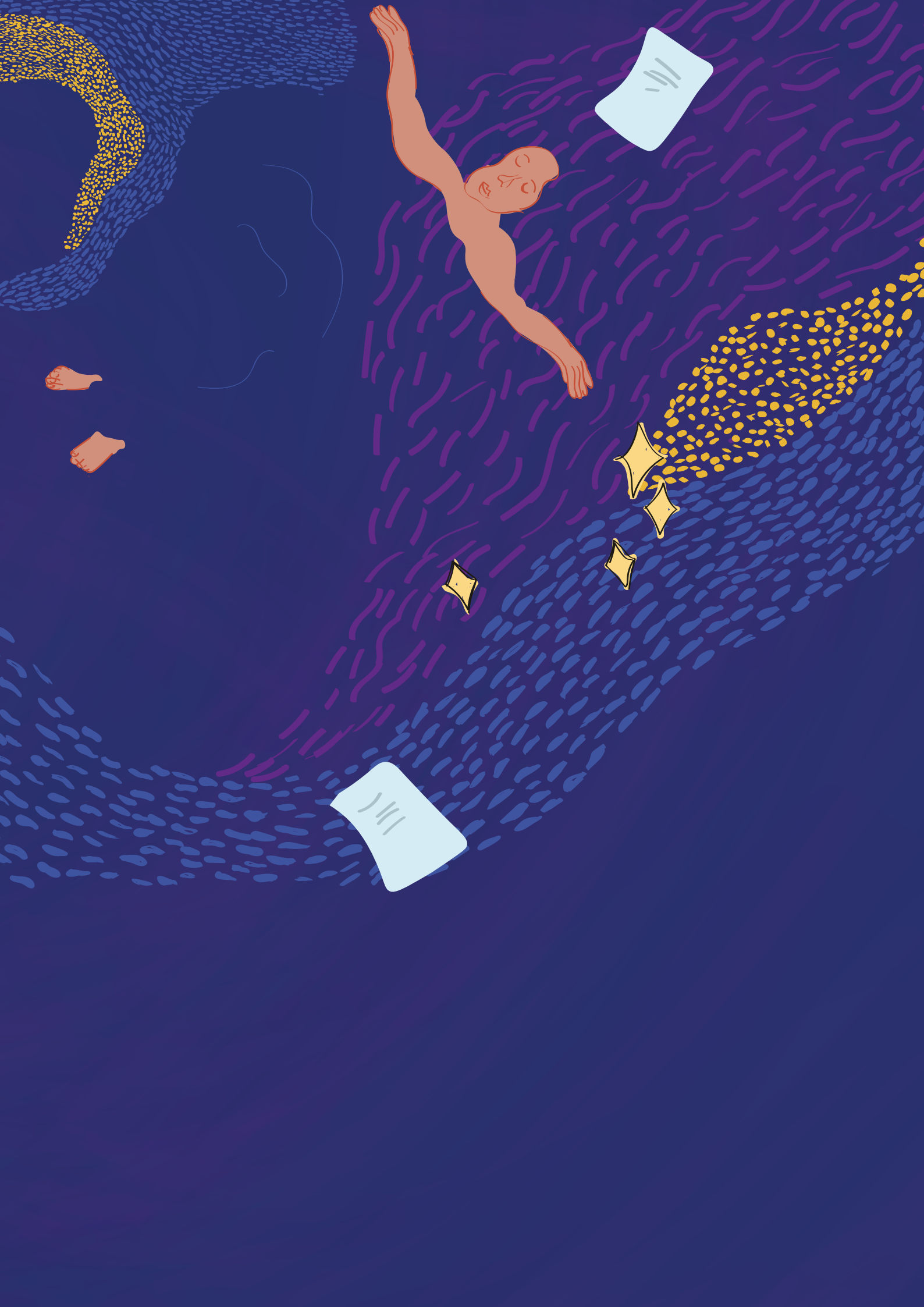
CHAPTER 12

The Impact and Legacy of the Hub:
Continuing the Work of Gender Justice and Inclusive Peace

12.1 Introduction

Co-authored by 150 members of the Gender, Justice and Security Hub, this Report provides a multi-level analysis and synthesis of the Hub's collaborative work over more than five years.

Section One outlined four key interlocking structural challenges – patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism and militarism; and four compounding contemporary crises – COVID-19, austerity, regional and country-specific conflicts, and the global backlash to gender, to human rights and to the rule of law. Attention to this structural analysis of violence and crises and the existing law and policy frameworks for addressing them, notably the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 and 16, is at the core of the Hub's work and has guided its 38 research projects.

Section Two provided an overview of the Hub's six thematic research streams, detailed findings and recommendations for each of its research projects and a briefing on the Hub's seven focus countries, which brought together the research in relevant Hub projects to set out action plans by country. By bringing together thematic, project-level and geographic analysis, Section Two presented an encyclopaedic overview of where and how Hub research seeks to advance gender justice and inclusive peace.

Section Three shifted the analytical lens to the Hub as a whole. It did so by looking at key lessons learned from the Hub's feminist approach to large-scale, transnational, interdisciplinary multi-partner research and outlining nine guiding principles for future gender, justice and security work including:

Listen More	Keep Talking About Gender	Name the Structural Problems
Weave Feminist Webs	Anticipate and Engage Friction	Centre Activism
Close Implementation Gaps and Fund the Work	Incorporate the Arts and Culture	Expand, Connect and Communicate the Evidence Base

The Hub's findings and recommendations point towards deep structural challenges – persistent violence and old and emergent threats to the livelihoods and fundamental rights and freedoms of women and of marginalised groups – that together make the goals of the WPS agenda and the SDGs seem beyond our collective reach. However, the Hub's work also reveals numerous examples of people labouring and organising around the world to expose and counter these challenges; to listen to, support and work with those most affected by them

and to chart a new path forward grounded in a belief that a more equal, just and peaceful world is possible. Navigating the pitfalls of naive optimism and paralysing pessimism, this Report advances a critical, creative and transformative feminist analysis and approach to addressing the nexus of inequalities -patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism and militarism. The next part of this Chapter sets out the ways in which this approach is beginning to yield results.

12.2 The Hub's Impact
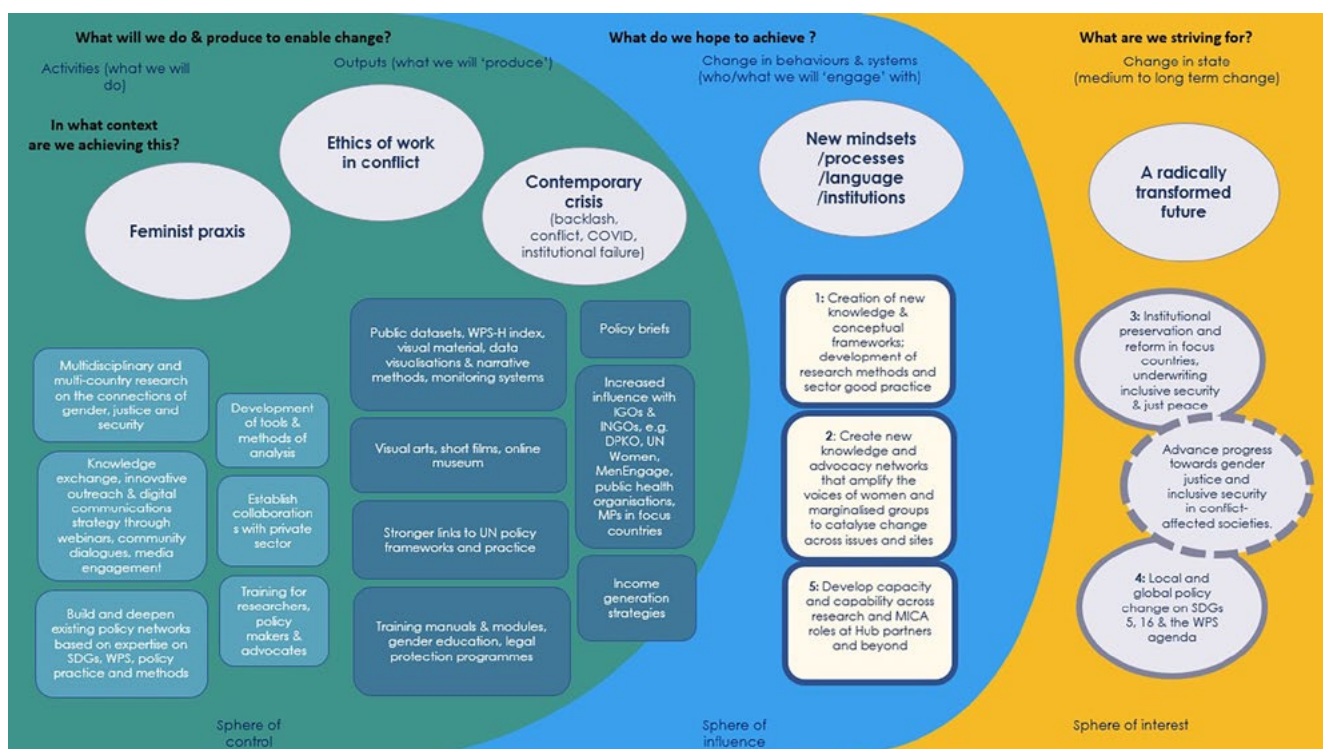
The Hub's Theory of Change

The research agenda of the Hub was driven by the desire to achieve five distinct forms of impact:

- the creation of new knowledge and advocacy networks that amplify the voices of women and marginalised groups to catalyse change into the future;

- local and global policy change on SDGs 5, 16 and the WPS agenda, informed by evidence generated by Hub research and taken forward through relationships with policymakers and activists;

- institutional preservation and reform in core countries and, more broadly, to underwrite inclusive security and just peace, instigated through relationships with key institutional actors;

- developing capacity and capability across Hub partners and beyond the Hub, including training and mentoring Hub members to enable them to support, train and mentor other partners in the future;

- creation of new knowledge, development of research methods and sectoral good practice which will benefit and be taken forward by the wider academic community.

The Hub's projects have already delivered in multiple ways across all of these impact goals and will continue to do so long into the future as the Hub's outputs continue, and are communicated to and acted upon by stakeholders. What follows is a cross-section highlighting some of the ways in which the Hub has been achieving its long-term impact objectives to date.

The 'Land Policy, Gender and Plural Legal Systems' project[1] has worked towards the establishment of inclusive land committees at the chiefdom level in Sierra Leone, leading to increased participation by women in land administration and awareness of gender-related legal rights and provisions. Partnerships with district and chiefdom authorities, as well as community-based organisations and women's groups, have been crucial in driving legal implementation and in empowering women through paralegal assistance. The project's efforts in promoting inclusionary policies in Sierra Leonean land committees and local courts have led to increased participation of women and greater recognition of their rights within family structures. The project's advocacy has empowered women to confront exclusionary practices and seek justice, influencing the public statements and actions of local leaders.

The 'Transitional Masculinity, Violence and Prevention' project[2] has collaborated with the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs in Kurdistan-Iraq to promote gender-sensitive policies, including potentially to restrict gender stereotypes in religious sermons and on social media. Similarly, the study on women combatants in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines conducted as part of the 'Gender, Governance, and Peacebuilding: Institutional Reform in Jordan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka' project[3] provided evidence that contributed to government action to support and distribute resources to previously marginalised groups. This encompasses compensation to women former combatants, who are now included in the regular government programmes including monthly rice and financial subsidy, free health care and registration for social pension.

The 'Beyond War Compensation' project[4] hosted a national Convention entitled "Aguu: Floating populations and the quest for social belonging in Northern Uganda," which attracted government officials in charge of planning for post-conflict recovery and civil society and women's rights organisations. The Convention called for state attention to social aspects of post-conflict recovery. During his speech, the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs directed his ministry officials and regional members of parliament to investigate why children born in captivity and without known parents and clan identity were denied national identity cards.

On the 'Social and Economic Rights in Transition' project[5], the team made significant contributions to the discourse surrounding a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, including through the Bill of Rights Working Group, convened by the Human Rights Consortium. This entailed multiple meetings with politicians and the submission of research findings to the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights. This work was crucial in shaping the ongoing debate and policy formulation concerning human rights in Northern Ireland.

The UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for Afghan women and girls, led by Hub member Dr Neelam Raina, was established to advance the rights and welfare of Afghan women and girls. Strategic engagements with key stakeholders such as the UK Foreign Secretary, International Development ministers, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Women and Labour Shadow Cabinet members, enable advocacy for Afghan women's empowerment and inclusion in post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Dr Raina's role in chairing a South Asian regional peace network facilitates ongoing dialogue and support for parliamentary debates on Afghanistan. Hub member Quhramaana Kakar and Hub partner organisation Women for Peace and Participation (WPP) also continue to work inside Afghanistan, adapting their programmes to reflect the reality on the ground and to address the needs of women and communities including economic and educational opportunities and gender-based violence prevention.[6] Also focused on Afghanistan, Hub member Dr Janroj Keles has secured funding from the Nuffield Foundation to research the outcomes and experiences of Afghan resettlement in the UK.

The 'Return, Reintegration and Political Restructuring' project[7] highlights the crucial role of Kurdish female returnees in advancing gender equality. Through media reports and high-level engagements, project research has catalysed public discourse and led to a collaboration with the Kurdish government regarding the relationship between the Kurdistan Regional Government and its European diaspora.

Hub member Professor Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, who served as UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism during her time on the Hub, has been instrumental in shaping policy discussions on counterterrorism's impact on civil society and promoting human rights globally, including through her Global Study on the Impact of Counterterrorism on Civil Society and Civic Space. This work draws on and is reflected in her Hub project 'Gender and Conflict Transformation'.[8]

Hub members Professor Christine Chinkin and Dr Paul Kirby have contributed to the future direction of the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI) as members of the PSVI Steering Group and delegates to its conference. Dr Kirby has also provided evidence to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee on PSVI progress and was commissioned to write a review of possibilities for improved military engagement on preventing sexual violence for the UK's WPS Helpdesk on request by the UK Ministry of Defence. In addition, members of the 'Men, Peace and Security' project[9] contributed to the development of the fifth UK National Action Plan on WPS (NAP) through expert feedback, especially informing thinking on domestication of WPS, which was reflected in the NAP.

The Hub has also engaged with international stakeholders. A group of Hub members attended the 2023 United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) and held meetings with the research initiative Pathfinders; UN Women; the UNDP Gender and Crisis Facility; and the International Peace Institute (IPI) to disseminate Hub research findings and recommendations. The Hub hosted two official CSW side-events with IPI and the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN respectively. Audience members included Country Mission Representatives, United Nations organisations, policymakers, members of the Women's Major Group, academics, activists, diplomats and ambassadors.

Hub members and their work contribute substantively to institutional reform in focus countries. The 'Potentialities and Politics of Transformative Justice in Sri Lanka' project[10] works to embed transformative justice and gender within institutional cultures and practices. The project team developed standard operating procedures (SOPs) for reporting and prosecuting incidents of conflict-related sexual violence and delivered training on these procedures to judges, medical officers, police officers, public servants and civil society organisations. Additionally, the project collaborated with regional women's groups to conduct trainings on the SOPs to support more women to raise their claims within the judicial system. Hub member Dr Camilo Sanchez led similar work in the Colombian context, delivering training for tribunal clerks and staff directly involved in the investigation of Case 11 of the Colombian Special Peace Jurisdiction (JEP) on sexual violence and crimes based on gender, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Hub member Professor Angelika Rettberg's appointment to the Committee that monitors the implementation of the recommendations of the Final Report of the Colombian Truth Commission puts her in a powerful position to communicate and seek to implement the findings of the Hub project 'Political

Economy of Reconciliation'.[11] Wilson Castañeda, Director of the NGO Caribe Afirmativo and Member of the Monitoring Committee of the Truth Commission in Colombia observed that Professor Rettberg's research on the Hub 'gives a very significant voice to the victims of the armed conflict and allows us to think about reconciliation from the voices of the victims. But also, it appears in a very strategic moment as we are facing a reformulation of the Victims' Law'.

The Hub has been particularly successful in capacity and capability building. The Hub Conventions, held in Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland, Colombia and online brought together large groups of Hub members for programmes that included methods training for Hub members and local academics and students; working sessions to develop research projects; and activities to engage participants in discussions around the Hub's work, legacy and values. By integrating visits and cultural exchanges with local activist groups, arts collectives, educational institutions and NGOs, the events also offered participants a deeper understanding of local contexts and challenges, and opportunities to build networks for future collaborations.

The 'Culture and Conflict' project[12] conducted training sessions in multiple countries, including India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. The trainings were part of the project's innovative participatory research methodology, which combined creating sustainable income generation streams for participants with gathering data about everyday understandings of peace. This approach moved away from extractive research and prioritised sustainable livelihoods for their research participants. The project received follow-up funding in India from local government bodies in recognition of its work with women entrepreneurs. Furthermore, its impact extended beyond training sessions, with successful policy engagements in India, leading to favourable outcomes and opportunities for scaling up initiatives in the region. Social media marketing and market pricing training sessions were organised in response to market surveys and project plans, enhancing participants' skills in these areas. This project has in addition supported the development of early career researchers and practitioners to develop their skills as community mobilisers, trainers and fieldwork researchers.

As part of the Hub's commitment to methodological innovation and arts-based methods, the 'Narrating (In)Security' project[13] delivered training on using memory mapping and theatre exercises as research methods. These were attended by workshop participants and facilitators and video production technical crews to build their capability to work effectively and sensitively in conflict zones. In Lebanon, the 'Changing SOGIE in Conflict, Peace and Displacement in the MENA Region'

project[14] also led creative writing and storytelling workshops to provide a supportive space for Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people and migrant women, contributing to inclusive knowledge production and influencing gender-related policies.

At the time of this Report's publication, the Hub has produced more than 200 research outputs including books, documentary films, academic journal articles, art exhibitions, book chapters, reports, briefs, videos and animations, blogs, and podcasts. Hub members continue to participate in seminars, deliver conference papers and engage with academic and activist audiences about their work on the Hub. This collective work is expanding the gender, justice and security evidence base in innovative and necessary ways. The Hub collectively and through its individual projects, outputs and members is already influencing policy and

practice in matters of gender, justice, security, transitional justice and the social and economic empowerment of women and marginalised communities in post-conflict settings. It has delivered capability-building initiatives aimed at advancing understanding and action both domestically and internationally. The five forms of impact the Hub aims at are far-reaching, and, despite the Hub experiencing backlash against its values and objectives, its research and practice have been material in securing advances. It has also contributed to the development of networks, academic discourse and feminist research methodologies and practice.

12.3 Final Reflections

Kirsten Ainley and Christine Chinkin, Co-Principal Investigators of the Gender, Justice and Security Hub

The Hub began, as many good things seem to, with a group of feminists drinking coffee and wondering how so much apparent progress in some areas, such as the adoption by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) of WPS resolutions, can lead to so little easing of the iron grip of patriarchy. We argued over whether meaningful and permanent structural change had taken place in the past fifty years, or whether feminist gains were only ever contingent on the whims of the powerful. And we toyed with the idea of applying for one of the £17 million Hub grants, which in 2017 had just been advertised by United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI). Neither of us, nor anyone else who eventually became a Hub member, nor the LSE as lead institution of the grant, had ever run a research grant even approaching that size. We had little concept of what would be involved in the logistics of project management, but the offer of so much resource to support projects on gender-informed and feminist work on peace, justice and security was just too tantalising. We knew, or knew of, so many remarkable researchers and activists in the field who were prevented from focusing on their work by constant struggles for funding. Against our better judgement, we built an application, working with Paul Kirby and Zoe Gillard to develop a Hub structure, which began with the projects themselves, prioritising the research questions that the experts in their fields saw as needing answers. Only once the projects were in place did we, alongside other Hub members as they joined the bid, devise a stream- and Hub structure to bring the projects into conversation.

From its outset, the Hub was designed as a feminist organisation with minimal hierarchy and commitments to the highest standards of ethics and care, equitable partnership and participatory and impactful research. As this Report has shown, the Hub's members have produced extensive research and impact, and as a collective we have worked hard to build an innovative model of research collaboration. In facing gender backlash, a global pandemic, crises across multiple of our focus countries, funding pressures and internal tensions, we remained committed to our collective vision. Sometimes this work came at great cost to ourselves (speaking here for the Hub's members as a whole) and at other times the leadership and more senior members of the Hub faced justified criticism. The experience of working together with the extraordinary group of people and partners who are or have been members of the Hub, or who have supported the Hub's work through our Advisory Board, has been a privilege. But our work has also been a baptism by fire in many respects, in particular in realising: the sheer volume of time it takes to build a global organisation of this size across multiple disciplines and to manage its people and resources; the creativity involved in ensuring that international partners in conflict- or low-income settings can reliably access their project funds and pay their staff; the diplomatic skills needed to deal with non- and anti-feminist institutions, shifting conventional ways of working to better realise equitable partnerships and a feminist ethic; the care and skill required to understand and try to resolve internal tensions; and the near impossibility of

prioritising mental and physical health under what has at times been unrelenting pressure. Of course, this all pales in the face of witnessing the unbearable price some Hub members have paid for their contributions to the Hub's work – the loss of loved ones, homes and security – and the arbitrary violence of borders and immigration systems in the states that profess to be the standard bearers of global ethics. Some of those who work for gender justice face much higher risks and bear much greater costs than others – a power imbalance we have tried to confront within the Hub through our risk management processes and safeguarding policy and fund but have not been able to fully mitigate.

Some of the most generative conversations we have had in the last years of the Hub have been about what it is to be a bad feminist[15] – to fail to mitigate power imbalances, generate consensus or avoid harm; to retreat rather than to fight; to replicate the structures we're trying to dismantle. Hub members have disagreed over issues such as which values should be supported or rejected by the Hub as a whole; where lines should be drawn around permitted speech to balance diversity against safety; whether there are unfair expectations around workload, and what the leadership of the Hub (through the Co-Principal Investigators; Co-Directors and Executive Group) should have done in response to the various crises we've faced. Most profoundly, there have been tensions throughout the Hub's work about the extent to which, with so much resource under our (notional) control, we should be kicking the doors down and breaking the windows of the patriarchal, militarist, colonial and capitalist structures in which we participate, rather than negotiating for piecemeal reform within these structures (and by doing so maintaining some power and privilege within them). These tensions are irresolvable. Nonetheless, it is critical to wrestle with them and to take action in spite of what often appear to be insurmountable obstacles. Inaction can be injustice and it isn't enough merely to critique the present. As feminists we also need to build the future. Hub members have done this through innovative, participatory and impact-driven research and action; and, when they felt it necessary, by speaking out. The Hub as a whole has been an exercise in large-scale feminist organisation and practice.

The experience of working together on this scale has shown that, despite backlash, crises and intractable structural challenges, more gender justice and more inclusive peace are within our reach across societies in the Global South and North that are impacted by conflict and violence. A grant of this size meant the Hub was at times unwieldy or inflexible, but it allowed for a large number of cognate projects and an even larger group of members to be brought together into a well-resourced conversation over time, through which we listened to and learned from the multiple perspectives represented, cared for each other and generated a deep solidarity that should, we hope, endure well beyond the end of the Hub's funding. But the Hub is, in the end, just a tributary to the ocean of feminist work needed to confront the challenges outlined in Chapter Two and discussed throughout this Report. We are proud to work within a much larger global movement of feminist researchers and advocates and hope that the Hub's outputs, impacts and experiences can contribute to the continued struggle towards radically transformed futures in which everyone, everywhere enjoys gender justice and inclusive peace.

Endnotes

1   See **Chapter 5.3** for more details on the Land Policy, Gender and Plural Legal Systems project.

2   See **Chapter 6.4** for more details on the Transitional Masculinity, Violence and Prevention project.

3   See **Chapter 4.4** for more details on the Gender, Governance, and Peacebuilding project.

4   See **Chapter 5.2** for more details on the Beyond War Compensation project.

5   See **Chapter 4.8** for more details on the Social and Economic Rights in Transition project.

6   See Quhramaana Kakar's Hub Voices spotlight on **p288** for more information.

7   See **Chapter 7.4** for more details on the Return, Reintegration and Political Restructuring project.

8   See **Chapter 8.5** for more details on the Gender and Conflict Transformation project.

9   See **Chapter 6.4** for more details on the Men, Peace and Security project.

10 See **Chapter 4.7** for more details on the Potentialities and Politics of Transformative Justice in Sri Lanka project.

11 See **Chapter 4.6** for more details on the Political Economy of Reconciliation project.

12 See **Chapter 4.3** for more details on the Culture and Conflict project.

13 See **Chapter 9.5** for more details on the Narrating (In)Security project project.

14 See **Chapter 6.2** for more details on the Changing SOGIE in Conflict, Peace and Displacement in the MENA Region project.

15 Roxane Gay, *Bad Feminist*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2014).

The Gender, Justice and Security Hub Bibliography

This bibliography includes a list of print publications based on Hub research. At the time of this Report's publication, there are many additional Hub publications in process and under review. Visit the Hub's website (www.TheGenderHub.com) and select the publications tab for an updated list. Importantly, the Hub's website also features a wide range of additional research outputs including documentary films, short videos and animations, digital art exhibitions, poems, pictures, podcasts, and various works of art and craft.

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