

Gender, conflict and development

Conflict prevention and development
co-operation in Africa: a policy
workshop

Wilton Park, November 2007

Panel: Addressing employment, youth and gender
dimensions





Questions

- What have been the impacts of war on gender relations?
- To what extent have gendered identities contributed to structures which generated or perpetuated violent conflict?
- What are the theoretical and policy implications?

Impacts of war on gender relations



- Division of labour changes
- Decision-making (household, community, national) changes a little, and inconsistently
- Ideological basis of gender relations remains the same, but can be shifted, given popular organisation and political will

Gender identities as contributory factors in violent conflict



- Men and women contribute to violent conflict in various ways (enrolment, encouragement, economic support, etc)
- Socialisation (in family and other institutions) processes are critical in shaping gender identities

Gender identities as contributory factor in cycles of violence



- Impacts of war (violence, displacement, destruction of economic resources, personal loss, collapse of cultural values) in turn frustrate men's and women's ability to act out gendered identities
- Unmet aspirations fuel destructive behaviours (domestic violence, military enlistment, violent crime, prostitution, drugs, depression, risky sexual behaviour, suicide)
- These in turn undermine shared social, political and economic capital



Implications for theory

- Vicious circles can be reversed if elements of this complexity can be unpacked
- Gender as a key element within a complex of factors that enhances propensity for violence
- Discourse can be an impediment
 - ‘root causes’
 - conflation of ‘gender’ with ‘women’
 - lack of contextual nuancing in policy discourse
 - gender isn’t a stand-alone concept

Conflict prevention: key elements



- Inclusive public debate around, and political commitment to, gender equality
- Varied ‘decent work’ opportunities, especially for young men and women
- Citizenship (the practice of mutual rights, responsibilities and respect between state and people, and among people)

Implications for post-conflict reconstruction



- Conflict offers a window of change for gender relations, BUT it has to be worked towards at all levels and in all sectors, by civil society, governments and the international community
- Dismantling gendered disadvantage requires short-term measures (security, rule of law) and long-term consolidation (dialogue, education, participation)