



# Joining the Dots

Exploring the economic empowerment of women in conflict affected areas combining UNSCR 1325, CEDAW, BPFA and MDGs

## **‘Joining the dots – Exploring the economic empowerment of women in conflict affected areas – combining UNSCR 1325, CEDAW, BPFA and MDGs’**

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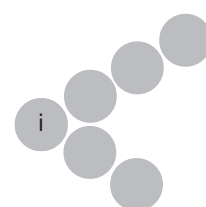
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## Joining the Dots... Workshop and Field Visit in Sri Lanka August 2011.







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## ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ADB	Asia Development Bank
AJK	Azad, Jammu and Kashmir
APWLD	Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development
APWW	Asia Pacific Women's Watch
AusAID	Australian Government Overseas Aid Program
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
BRA	Badan Reintegrasi Aceh
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
COLA	Cost of Living Allowance
CPN (M)	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DOM	Daerah Operasi Militer
DS	Divisional Secretariat
DVD	Digital Versatile Disk
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
FANA	Federally Administered Northern Areas
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FLA	Family Law Act
FNPF	Fiji National Provident Fund
FRWM	Fiji Women's Rights Movement
GAM	Garakan Aceh Merdeka
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GCC	Great Council of Chiefs
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOVS	Government of Sri Lanka
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDP's	Internally displaced persons
IDI's	In depth interviews
INGO's	International Non-Government Organisations
JERA Int	Justice Equality Rights Access International
KP	Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (formerly North-West Frontier Province)
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOU	Memorandum Of Understanding
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NPA	National Plan of Action
OP	Optional Protocol
PER	Public Emergency Regulations
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association
TSNM	Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Mohammadi
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDC	Village Development Committees
WB	World Bank
WCDM	Women's Coalition for Disaster Management
WFS	Women Friendly Spaces
WHH	Women Headed Household
WMC	Women and Media Collective
WRD	Women Rural Development Society



# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
ACRONYMS	vii
Executive Summary	1
Rationale for study	5
Scope of the inquiry	6
Research Methodology	6
Researchers	6
Selection of the Case Studies	6
Framing Women's Economic Empowerment in Conflict situations within the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)	7
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	8
Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA)	8
UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325)	9
Millennium Development Goals (MDG's)	9
Conflict and War in the Asia Pacific	10
Case Study Country Contexts and summary of findings	11
Overarching Research Findings	11
Surviving Conflict, Drawing on International Instruments	11
Displacement:	13
Insecurity and Violence	14
Economic Security	17
Representation of Women in Decision Making structures (within the household and in the community)	23
Conclusions	27
Strengthening the Human Rights Framework	29
Annex A : Case Surviving Waves of Displacement, Batticaola District Sri Lanka	31
Annex B : Country Case Studies	33
Aceh	33
Fiji	37
Kyrgyzstan	46
Nepal	50
Pakistan	58
Sri Lanka	63
Research Partners	71
Table 1 : Strengthening the Human Rights Framework : MDGs, CEDAW, BPFA, UNSCR 1325	4
Table 2 : Case Study Countries International Obligations to Women's Rights	11
Table 3 : Strengthening the Human Rights Framework	30



## Executive Summary

**G**ender equality and women's economic empowerment are essential to achieve effective and sustainable development; to foster vibrant economies and to promote peace and security. It is important to recognize the unique contributions women can make as countries emerge from economic crisis, especially in conflict and disaster affected societies.

We take this opportunity to share with you the findings of an Asia Pacific regional research inquiry conducted collaboratively between Justice Equality Rights Access (JERA) International, an Australian based women's NGO; Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW) a regional network of women's organizations and groups in the Asia Pacific Region; and Women and Media Collective (WMC), a Sri Lankan based NGO.

The research was carried out in six countries from the Asia Pacific Region; Aceh (East Asia) Fiji (the Pacific), Kyrgyzstan (Central Asia), and Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka (South Asia). These countries were identified as having been affected by conflict; by the overthrow of governments and the institution of repressive regimes, or by other military operations, resulting in large numbers of people being killed or becoming Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and by the destruction of property.

The inquiry explores the reality of the lives of women affected by conflict and the effect on their opportunities for livelihood enhancement and economic empowerment.

It sheds light on the opportunities to contribute to achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and compliance with International Human Rights Conventions and treaties in two ways;

- (1) by exploring and documenting the cross-linkages between these Human Rights Instruments in the context of women's economic empowerment in conflict affected and post-conflict contexts in the Asia Pacific Region;
- (2) by building knowledge and awareness of Human Rights Instruments at the grass roots level to explore practical ways to implement CEDAW, BPFA, UNSCR 1325, and support a human rights framework for the achievement of the MDG.

This knowledge can be used to strengthen the achievement of MDG in the context of economic empowerment programs for women in Asia Pacific conflict affected and post-conflict areas.

In addition to this report there is a DVD which highlights the key areas discussed during the collection of data.

The six country study brought to light 4 key realities in the lives of women who are living in/have lived in situations of conflict. These realities are:

- Displacement,
- Insecurity and Violence,
- Economic insecurity,
- Lack of representation of women in decision making structures (within the household and in the community).

These realities were identified as key barriers to women's economic development and empowerment across all states of conflict and conflict affected societies. The case studies reveal that each of these areas intersect and compound the issues for women within conflict and conflict affected areas.

The challenges women are facing are core areas addressed in the International Conventions and Agreements on women within which the study was framed. By setting out the accounts of women's experiences, we argue that there is an urgent need to place the complementary measures set out in international mechanisms and agreements in the Asia Pacific context. What this study also reveals is that, despite the international recognition of rights of women, these have often not been translated into practice on the ground. Women suffer sustained violations of their human rights, particularly in societies torn by conflict.

Issues of livelihood and economic empowerment are integrally tied to issues of permanent resettlement. Displacement, one time or periodic, is one of the most severe consequences of war that a population has to go through. In the face of conflict, displacement becomes a debilitating reality for families, communities and at times entire villages. People may be compelled to leave their homes as fighting or devastation becomes intolerable. They may be forcibly displaced by either Government or by non-governmental combatants. Displacement weakens social and economic structures making individuals, families and women vulnerable to control by groups or armies with different political or ideological agendas. Displacement takes away people from their economic avenues for survival; it deprives women from access to healthcare, children from access to education and blurs the roles and responsibilities within and outside the family unit.

Protracted insecurity, fear and violence abound throughout the case studies and yet we are afforded a mere glimpse of the impact this has on women's lives. This manifests itself in many ways with regards to the economic empowerment of women in conflict and conflict affected areas. Within the context of this study, focus groups and interviews were carried out with a great deal of sensitivity to ensure the safety of the women who attended and spoke as well as the local organizations working in the areas.

The economic well-being of women is often measured by their advancement in education, income, occupation and decision-making. When using a human rights based and a feminist approach, the power relations between men/women becomes quite obvious in determining women's economic status. This is directly linked to how women are able to make decisions and exercise their rights as identified in the international human rights laws particularly the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).



All the countries within this case study are signatory to the UN-CEDAW and party to a number of agreements and treaties including the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, Beijing Platform for Action, and MDG. However, for all 6 countries included in this inquiry, conflict and political unrest in its multiple forms, has negatively impacted on achieving significant progress in realisation of women's rights despite the highlighted and agreement in principle to the provision of economic advancement of women.

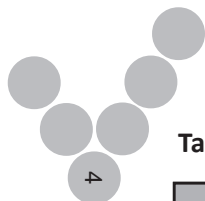
States and International agencies are non-responsive to the need for women's economic empowerment. International obligations may be included in a particular country's National Plans of Action, but these plans that claim to deliver significant progress in the lives of women are not implemented at the local level. This research study frames its inquiry into international and national level policy and practice to critically highlight the linkages that would lead to meaningful change in the lives of women.

It is clear from these case studies that in conflict and conflict affected societies, there is a need to move from a framework which focuses solely on violence and on the 'protection' of women, to a framework that is centered on the 'protection of women's rights' in all shapes and forms. This framework should engage with the multiple effects of conflict in the social, economic, political, cultural and civil areas, as well as engaging with the complex psychological and ideological changes that result from conflict and transition. Strengthening and building on existing human rights conventions and frameworks could play a critical role in supporting and protecting women through all states of conflict.

Throughout all case studies the economic empowerment of women depended on:

- women's individual circumstances,
- the nature of the conflict;
- the dominant ideologies,
- the aims of the parties to the conflict,
- the political environment for democratic governance
- and whether or not there are policies and institutions that are conducive to women's empowerment.

Promotion of gender equality and empowering women is embedded in the Millennium Declaration, and is one of the eight MDG. It is also strongly argued that equality and women's empowerment are critical to achieving the MDG. This study supports the comprehensive and indispensable use of CEDAW, the BPFA and UNSCR 1325 frameworks, already endorsed by the countries under study, to ensure MDG implementation.



**Table 1: Strengthening the Human Rights Framework : MDGs, CEDAW, BPFA, UNSCR 1325**

MDG Goals	Related CEDAW Article(s)	CEDAW General Recommendations	Related Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) Critical Area of Concern	UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) S/RES/1325 (2000)
<p>Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</p> <p>Goal 2 Achieve universal primary education</p> <p>Goal 3 Promote gender equality and empower women</p> <p>Goal 8 Develop a global partnership for development</p>	<p>Articles 1 (Discrimination), 2 (Policy measures) and 5 (Sex role stereotyping and prejudice) are relevant to all MDG.</p> <p>Article 3 Guarantee of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, including from hunger.</p> <p>Article 7 Political and public life</p> <p>Article 8 Representation</p> <p>Article 11 Employment</p> <p>Article 14 Rural women</p>	<p>No 5 1988 Temporary special measures, affirmative action, preferential treatment and quotas, in education, economy, politics and employment.</p> <p>No 6 1988 Effective national machinery to advise on the impact on women or policies and monitor the situation of women.</p> <p>No 9 1998 Statistical data on women to be presented separately for women and men.</p> <p>No 12 Violence against women – States parties to protect women against violence in the family, at work of in social life.</p> <p>No 16 Unpaid women workers in rural and urban family enterprise.</p>	<p>A . Women and poverty – the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women. Strategic objectives A1, A2, A3 and A4</p> <p>B. Education and training of women Strategic objectives B3, B4, B5 and B6</p> <p>D. Violence Against Women Strategic objectives D1 and, D2</p> <p>E. Women and Armed Conflict Strategic objectives E1, E4, E5 and E6</p> <p>F. Women and the economy Strategic objectives F1, F2, F3, F4, F5 and F6</p> <p>G. Women in power and decision making Strategic objectives G1 and G2</p> <p>H. Institutional Mechanisms for the advancement of Women Strategic objectives H1, H2, H3</p> <p>I. Human Rights of Women Strategic objectives I1, I2 and I3</p> <p>L. Girl Child Strategic objectives L4, L5, L7 and L8</p>	<p>Utilizing the principles enshrined within UNSCR 1325: Prevention; Participation; Protection. Reflecting these principles through all relief and recovery programmes.</p> <p>Specifically <i>Calls on</i>:</p> <p>8. All actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including, inter alia: (a) The special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction;</p> <p>10. All parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict</p> <p>15. <i>Expresses</i> its willingness to ensure that Security Council missions take into account gender considerations and the rights of women, including through consultation with local and international women's groups</p>

## Rationale for study

Recent decades have seen great progress in commitments to advance gender equality at national and global levels, particularly since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The Beijing Platform for Action and Beijing +5 were landmark documents for women around the world. CEDAW, Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Millennium Development Goals are also landmark documents for women's advancement. These documents have played a key role in assisting governments and other stakeholders in many countries to achieve progress and in developing and implementing programs to support legislation and policy changes aimed at gender equality.

Despite important progress made, there remain many obstacles to women's equal participation and economic decision-making. Conflict and crises have increased the feminization of poverty and displacement across the region. Women's involvement in unpaid work that is invisible in economic statistics is vital to the national economy, but most urgently to the survival of families and communities. Women's informal sector activities are labour intensive, requiring unregulated long hours of work and often combined with household chores and responsibilities. This in effect limits or, in many cases prevents, women's participation in decision making at various levels. In the context of living in conflict affected areas, the issue of physical safety of their families, communities and themselves, makes women's access to resources and pathways to empowerment difficult, placing them in a vulnerable position in society.

Gender equality, poverty alleviation and women's empowerment are integral parts of a wider long-term transformation of conflict affected countries. Gender equality and women's economic empowerment are essential to achieve effective and sustainable development; to foster a vibrant economy and to promote peace and security. It is important to recognize the unique contributions women do make as countries work out of economic crisis, especially in conflict and disaster affected societies.

The Asia Pacific region contains approximately 60% of the world's women. This region has an emergency profile characterised by a combination of natural disasters and civil/political unrest with pockets of conflict situations. In addition, major natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis, cyclones, typhoons and heavy floods, devastate the lives of millions of people in the region, with women being disproportionately affected by natural disasters.

The impact of conflict on women's economic and political empowerment was strongly highlighted as a regional issue in the Beijing +15 Asia Pacific NGO Regional Conference '*Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future*' held on 22-24 October 2009 at Miriam College, Quezon City, Philippines. In 2012, at the Commission on the Status of Women 55<sup>th</sup> Session, a parallel event hosted by Asia Pacific Women's Watch, brought together women from conflict affected societies across the Asia Pacific Region to share their insights into the opportunities and challenges that arise through situations of conflict and in post conflict contexts, to generate livelihoods and rebuild their communities. Their presentations reiterate the thesis of the World Development Report 2011<sup>1</sup> that aiding women to recover socially and economically from violence and conflict is not only good for themselves, but also for their families and society as a whole.

<sup>1</sup>The World Bank (2011)  
World Development  
Report 2011; Conflict,  
Security and  
Development p163



Using a bottom-up approach to understand economic empowerment in conflict affected settings allows for us to establish linkages between women, the civil society and the state that are key to securing the wellbeing of women's lives, of their dependents, and of the communities they live in.

## Scope of the inquiry

This research project explores common perceptions and understandings around key women's rights instruments; UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the current global development paradigm, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in the context of economic empowerment programs for women in Asia Pacific conflict affected and post-conflict areas. It also explores the cross linkages between the Human Rights Instruments and delivery of the Millennium Development Goals.

## Research Methodology

The study made use of the following research methodologies:

- Desk and literature reviews
- Document analysis
- Focus Groups
- Semi-structured interviews with individuals, including, but not limited to focal persons in government, CSO's, the UN and the private sector working on economic empowerment of women

The research methodology was largely field-based and qualitative. Substantive information was an integral part of the research methodology in the belief that dialogue and the development of sustainable community economic mechanisms needed to be built upon a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of community needs. Information was drawn from women in conflict affected communities in facilitated focus groups and semi-focused interviews. The emphasis on this methodology was in hearing the needs and concerns of those whose livelihoods were affected due to conflict. Using the words and examples from those affected avoids the possibilities of misinterpretation and distortion of outsiders viewing the issue from their own perspective. As the focus groups and semi-structured interviews were held in the language of the country, and then translated into English, this report in draft format has been reviewed by the original researchers for meaning and cross-checking.

## Researchers

Researchers were drawn from organizations represented in the APWW Steering Committee who work actively with grassroots organizations, have a good understanding of UN conventions and treaties and who were able to undertake data collection field visits in their respective countries.

## Selection of the Case Studies

This research study was carried out in six countries across the region, Aceh (East Asia), Fiji (the Pacific), Kyrgyzstan (Central Asia), Nepal (South Asia), Pakistan (South Asia) and Sri Lanka (South Asia). These countries are among those in the region that have been most affected by conflict, whether in terms of the takeover of government and institution of repressive regimes or by military warfare/operations causing death and destruction and resulting in large numbers of people being made into internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The impact of these conflicts on women is particularly harsh with women having to face greater economic challenges in finding paid work, often in insecure environments, while being compelled to take on more responsibility for unpaid household work in post conflict situations.

## **Framing Women's Economic Empowerment in Conflict situations within the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**

Economic empowerment recognises that increasing women's access to quality education, decent paid work (whether in the formal or informal sector), land and other resources contribute positively to gender inclusion, sustainable development and growth in prosperity.

Women's economic empowerment is imperative not only for women themselves as a matter for enjoying equal rights, but is key to ending extreme poverty and rebuilding relations within the family, community and society. Respect for women and girls' human rights and their role in democratic institutions, the rule of law, and inclusive and sustainable economic development are at the foundations of peaceful societies.

Violent conflict affects individual and community access to essential resources. Lack of access to livelihoods and lack of access to resources by individuals or households is often a primary factor in motivating societal violence. In some cases, it has been shown that if livelihood support is offered early enough in societies in which democratic structures of governance are strained, conflict may be avoided<sup>2</sup>. In conflict affected areas, where state or private provision of services no longer function, women's gendered role as care giver becomes essential to survival of their households and communities.

The current development paradigm across the Asia Pacific Region is the achievement of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These 8 goals are an attempt to capture measurable areas of development and are acclaimed as an international consensus on development goals.

The economic empowerment of women is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of all the MDGs. Gender equality and empowered women are catalysts for multiplying development efforts. Investments in gender equality yield the highest returns of all development investments<sup>3</sup>.

Yet, as Shanthi Dairiam<sup>4</sup> (2005) argues, while the MDG's may be the dominant development paradigm, the MDG's lack a clear human rights framework. In keeping with developments in human rights law and practice, there are many international human rights instruments, treaties and plans for action to be drawn on and by using their jurisprudence and norms and standards, the MDGs could not only strengthen delivery of development goals, but also provide a strong basis for state accountability to international and universal standards. This study investigates three key women's rights instruments; The Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and it investigates practical ways to integrate linkages between these conventions, treaties and resolutions and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

<sup>2</sup> USAID Livelihoods and Conflict A toolkit for intervention 2005 ([http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/cross-cutting\\_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CMM\\_Livelihoods\\_and\\_Conflict\\_Dec\\_2005.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CMM_Livelihoods_and_Conflict_Dec_2005.pdf))

<sup>3</sup> OECD (2010), Accelerating progress towards the MDGs through pro-poor growth: policy messages from the DAC Network on Poverty Reduction, OECD, Paris.

<sup>4</sup> Dairiam, S (2005) EGM/BPFA-MD-MDG/20050EP.8 'The Relevance of the links between Human Rights, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals' UN DAW 3 February, 2005

## Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)<sup>5</sup>

CEDAW is the major human rights treaty for women and countries that have ratified CEDAW report on the advancement of women in their countries. It contains 30 articles that provide a comprehensive framework to promote human rights, achieve positive progress towards gender equality and overcome barriers of discrimination against women and girls, while also recognizing that it is up to each country to determine how best to bring their policies and laws in line with ending discrimination against women. CEDAW provides a normative framework on which to frame development work and a theoretical framework by which to identify barriers to women's right to equality, to assess needs, to set goals and to identify measures and to evaluate accomplishments. The CEDAW Convention is a legal instrument and hence does not define every context nor does it give details of the content of action that needs to be implemented. The 186 countries that have ratified CEDAW are bound by the Convention to report on the status of women in each country to the CEDAW Committee thus enabling progress in women's rights to be assessed at the national and international levels.

Article 21 of CEDAW empowers the CEDAW Committee to make suggestions and general recommendations based on the examination of reports and information received from state parties. Suggestions are usually directed at United Nations entities, while general recommendations are addressed to States parties and usually elaborate the Committee's view of the obligations assumed under the Convention. This mechanism allows for CEDAW to include issues as they emerge.

By accepting CEDAW, States commit themselves to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including to:

- Incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, and abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt new laws that prohibit discrimination against women;
- Establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination;
- Ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organisations or enterprises.

The General Recommendations and Country Reports to CEDAW Committee provide gender analysis and practical inputs for a gender-responsive rights based approach to the MDGs.

## Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA)

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), adopted by 189 countries at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995 is an internationally agreed plan for achieving equality for women across 12 critical areas. The critical areas identified are: poverty, education and training, health, the economy, power and decision-making, human rights, armed conflict, institutional mechanisms, the environment, violence against women and the girl child.

Each of the critical areas of concern:

- Diagnoses the specific problem for women in the area;
- Proposes strategic objectives and concrete actions; and
- Identifies which actions are to be taken by specific actors in order to achieve the objectives.

The objectives and actions are interlinked, of high priority and mutually reinforcing.

<sup>5</sup> It is noted that as this research is underway, a General Recommendation for CEDAW on Women in Armed Conflict is currently being discussed.



Reporting on the BPFA takes place at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) High Level Meetings each year. The BPFA contains a range of strategic objectives and actions to bring about the outcomes demanded by CEDAW. The BPFA was developed with strong involvement of civil society and is one of the better known areas of women's rights for many grass roots organizations. CEDAW and the BPFA are mutually reinforcing, and the synergy between these two could provide both normative standards and accountability.

Similar to CEDAW, reporting on the Beijing Platform for Action 12 Critical Areas, through the Commission on the Status of Women, provide gender analysis and practical inputs for gender-responsive rights based approach to the MDGs.

## UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325)

The first resolution on women, peace and security, Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR1325), was unanimously adopted by United Nations Security Council on 31 October 2000. UNSCR1325 marked the first time the Security Council addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and recognized the under-valued and under-utilized contributions women make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building. It also stressed the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security. UN SCR1325 is binding upon all UN Member States and the adoption of the Resolution marked an important international political recognition that women and gender are relevant to international peace and security. Key provisions of UNSCR 1325 include:

- Increased participation and representation of women at all levels of decision-making.
- Attention to specific protection needs of women and girls in conflict.
- Gender perspective in post-conflict processes, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post conflict reconstruction;
- Gender perspective in UN programming, reporting and in SC missions.
- Gender perspective and training in UN peace support operations.

While these provisions do not directly reflect women's role in economic development, UNSCR 1325 and other following Security Council Resolutions on Women Peace and Security, do recognize the active role women play in establishing and maintaining peace and security, and that women are crucial partners in shoring up the foundations of lasting peace; economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy<sup>6</sup>. Women's economic empowerment is reflected in many of the National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325.

## Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in effect consolidate previous agreements, including those on women's rights, women's empowerment and gender equality into a single set of core goals, targets and benchmarks for the development community.

The Paris Declaration (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), two documents which set out to increase the impact aid has in reducing poverty and inequality and accelerating the achievement of the MDGs, acknowledge that addressing gender equality is key to achieving aid effectiveness and the MDGs. Para 13c of the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) states:

*"Developing countries and donors will ensure that their respective development policies and programs are designed and implemented in ways consistent with their agreed international commitments on gender equality, human rights, disability and environmental sustainability". (para 13c Accra Agenda for Action (2008))*

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, 'Women's Participation in Peacebuilding: Report of the Secretary General,' 7 September, 2010, A/65/354-S/2010/466

The Accra Declaration, 20 July 2010 on achieving the MDGs in crisis settings reflects on the opportunities for, and obstacles to, the achievement of the MDGs in countries affected by conflict, armed violence and fragility, and vulnerable to the disruption caused by human and natural disasters, climate change and the global food, fuel and financial and economic crisis. It acknowledges that crises and the resulting disruption to economic growth and livelihoods, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, depletion of development assets and capacities, and the breakdown of the rule of law, justice and security are a major threat, not only to making new progress towards the MDGs, but even to the sustenance and consolidation of the hard-won gains towards the MDGs. Indeed, countries affected by violent conflict, armed violence, fragility and high vulnerability to disaster will find it extremely difficult to fully achieve the MDGs by 2015. It also declares that persistent inequality and a lack of progress towards the MDGs may increase the risk of conflict and armed violence. The Accra Declaration, calls for:

- Recognition of the specific challenges posed by conflict, armed violence, fragility and disasters.
- Support for a focused and accelerated effort in countries affected by conflict, fragility, armed violence and disasters
- Strengthening of international partnerships to address these needs, demonstrate progress and enable improved international support

It is obvious from the case studies contained within this research that at the time of writing, State governments in the countries surveyed do not align their rehabilitation and repatriation activities with its international commitments, especially considering the Accra declaration and achievement of MDGs.

Gender equality is central to achieving the MDG's and it is a precondition for sustainable growth and poverty reduction. However, the Millennium Development Goals are often considered to be separate from Human Rights and Women's Rights, and thus the linkages between the MDGs, CEDAW, UNSCR 1325 and the Beijing Platform for Action are not fully utilized in reporting and often do not make sense to grassroots NGO's.

## Conflict and War in the Asia Pacific

It is reported that almost half of the on-going armed intrastate conflicts in the world today are fought in the Asia Pacific region<sup>7</sup>. The situations in conflict/war-torn and politically unstable countries seem nowhere near resolution, further increasing the number of internally displaced persons and general disruption to society. In addition to the structural threats, which are intrinsic to the region, Asia-Pacific is also affected by global threats<sup>8</sup>, such as the consequences of high food and fuel prices and the risks and incidences of HIV/AIDS, pandemic influenza, malaria and other emerging diseases. While proportions of female and male refugees are nearly equal on a global basis, regional differences exist. In the Asia Pacific region, it is estimated that women and children make up 80% of the refugee population, because their husbands or fathers have died, been taken prisoner, disappeared, or become combatants. It is difficult to obtain actual numbers of women in IDP and resettlement camps, nor to find statistics on women living in camps for those affected by armed conflict in countries where the Refugee treaty has not been ratified.

In the most fragile states, for those engaged in or just emerging from conflict, getting back to work is a critical step towards a sustainable peace. Development strategies promote market-based opportunities for some women, for example by strengthening women's associations and advocating gender-sensitive business environment reform. There are also examples where women, despite gender-specific barriers, have established viable enterprises based on familial and community networks, e.g. Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, thus in some instances changing the gender relations in the family and community.

<sup>7</sup> OCHA, 2009, *Risk assessment and mitigation measures for natural and conflict related hazards in Asia-Pacific*, NGL report 20071600-1 23 April 2009

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF Humanitarian Action Report (2009) ([http://www.unicef.org/har09/index\\_apssc.html](http://www.unicef.org/har09/index_apssc.html))

Communities adjust their livelihood strategies to mitigate the effects of conflict and to make use of what is available. Livelihood strategies may be creative and positive, such as when people find new ways of trading with each other, make new alliances to negotiate use of another group's grazing areas, or diversify their economic base. Other livelihood strategies may be negative, involving criminal activity, violence or activities that may be unsustainable or harmful in the long term despite their apparent short-term benefits<sup>9</sup>. The changing structures both at the societal and family level allow for change in gender relationships to occur.

## Case Study Country Contexts and summary of findings

This study was carried out in Aceh (East Asia), Fiji (the Pacific), Kyrgyzstan (Central Asia), Nepal (South Asia), Pakistan (South Asia) and Sri Lanka (South Asia). These six countries are some of those most affected by conflicts in the Asia Pacific region.

Some of these conflict situations for example those in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal and Aceh are regularly covered by international media. Others, such as in Fiji and in Kyrgyzstan are less well known. The common thread that links these countries is the impact that conflict has on women's economic situation; irrespective of which country is in a state of conflict, the women in that country face challenges that can be articulated and framed by the four international instruments/agreements. This enables better understanding, with these international frameworks, of processes that are required to effectively respond to challenges in integrating women's experiences and challenges in survival strategies.

All countries covered in this research are signatories to CEDAW and have adopted the other Human Rights Instruments and the MDGs. Summaries of each Country Case Study can be found at Annex A.

**Table 2 : Case Study Countries International Obligations to Women's Rights**

Country	CEDAW (signatory)	Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) (Adopted)	Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)(Adopted)	UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security)(Binding on all UN Member States)
Kyrgyzstan	1997	1995	2000	2000
Pakistan	1996	1995	2000	2000
Nepal	1991	1995	2000	2000
Sri Lanka	1981	1995	2000	2000
Aceh (Indonesia)	1984	1995	2000	2000
Fiji	1995	1995	2000	2000

## Overarching Research Findings

### Surviving Conflict, Drawing on International Instruments:

Women living in conflict affected areas are affected by wars in a multitude of ways, both directly and indirectly. Drawing on the experiences of participants in this six case-study investigation, it is clear that women are subject to violations of their civil and political rights such as freedom of movement and of expression; they are victims of abduction, disappearance, rape, violence, arbitrary arrest, detention and torture. Women lose their husbands, sons, daughters who become victims of the conflict. Women who were active

<sup>9</sup> USAID Livelihoods and Conflict A toolkit for intervention 2005 ([http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/cross-cutting\\_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CMM\\_Livelihoods\\_and\\_Conflict\\_Dec\\_2005.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CMM_Livelihoods_and_Conflict_Dec_2005.pdf))

combatants are subject to hostilities and abuse by their communities on return to their villages. Those who challenge gender-based stereotypes and norms are often punished for it.

Economic, social and cultural rights are violated by multiple displacements from homes and sources of livelihoods. This deprives access to health and education, and of opportunities to political participation. Sexual and reproductive rights are denied as violence, 'customary practices', rape and sexual abuse combined with the lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services and breakdown of societal structures.

Civil, economic and political rights disappear or are stressed, with the collapse or takeover of infrastructure and civic institutions. The rights to adequate health, housing, education, freedom of movement and expression, privacy and fair trial are just a few of those noted throughout the case studies, when local administrations are unable to function and policy and judicial systems break down, shatter or become corrupted. As government institutions become increasingly more militarized, safety and security, becomes a major barrier to all, but especially to women and girls who suffer gender based violence and abuse with little or no recourse to justice. As is evident from the Sri Lankan and Aceh case studies, prolonged conflicts also affect rural areas; crops are destroyed, subsistence farming and lack of land lead to chronic food shortages and the subsequent health impacts of this debilitate the lives of survivors. Poverty and ill health are the most devastating long-term consequences of conflicts.

As this inquiry reveals, the economic dependence on male family members, makes women more vulnerable in situations of conflict where men die, disappear or are arrested. Women find themselves in a situation of providing for their families with little or no resources. Desperation can draw women into sex work, sexual bartering for food and services and illegal activities such as the production of illicit liquor.

Human rights systems have the potential to respond to a wide range of issues affecting women in conflict, and conflict affected areas. In order to strengthen the protections and rights of women and girls in conflict and conflict affected areas, it is imperative to capture the diversity in the type and nature of the conflict, and the various roles that states, non-state actors, international organisations, families communities and the individuals themselves play in them.

In focusing on the economic empowerment of women, throughout all the case studies, the nature of the conflict, the specificities of the ideologies and aims of parties to the conflict, the political environment for democratic governance were seen to be key factors that directly affect women's access to and control over resources for economic empowerment.

It is clear from these case studies that in conflict and conflict affected societies, there is a need to move from a framework that focuses solely on violence and on the 'protection' of women, to a framework that is centred around the 'protection of women's rights' in all shapes and forms. This framework should engage with the multiple effects of conflict in the social, economic, political, cultural and civil areas, as well as engaging with the complex psychological and ideological changes that result from conflict and transition. Strengthening and building on existing human rights conventions and frameworks could play a critical role in supporting and protecting women through all states of conflict.



The six country study brought to light 4 key realities in the lives of women who are living in/have lived in situations of conflict. These realities are:

- Displacement,
- Insecurity and Violence,
- Economic Security,
- Representation of Women in Decision Making structures (within the household and in the community).

These realities were identified as key barriers to their economic development and empowerment across all states of conflict and conflict affected societies. The case studies reveal that each of these areas intersect and compound the issues for women within conflict and conflict affected areas.

Each of these are core areas embedded in the International Conventions and Agreements on Women within which the study was framed. By setting out the accounts of women's experiences, it can be argued that there is an urgent need to draw on the complementary measures set out in these international mechanisms and agreements in the Asia Pacific context.

The Case Study from K village (Annex A) highlights the intersection of all these issues.

## **Displacement:**

Issues of livelihood and economic empowerment are integrally tied to issues of permanent resettlement. Displacement, one time or periodic, is one of the most severe consequences of war that a population has to go through. In the face of conflict, displacement becomes a debilitating reality for families, communities and at times entire villages. People may be compelled to leave their homes as fighting or devastation becomes intolerable; they may be forcibly displaced by either government or by non-governmental actors engaged in war with the state. Displacement weakens social and economic structures thus making individuals, families, women, vulnerable to control by groups or armies with different political or ideological agendas. Displacement takes people from their economic avenues for survival, it deprives women from access to healthcare, children from access to education, and blurs the roles and responsibilities within and outside the family unit.

In Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Kyrgyzstan conflict displaced whole communities, fighting and armed warfare in many places killed men and boys, leaving women as single heads of household returning to devastating circumstances. Being forced to move from district to district to find safer areas only to find that continuing fighting and lack of personal security drives them to move in search of other areas. Or, being in situations where the State forcibly moves already displaced populations to areas that it considers suitable, irrespective of the wishes of the community. Also noted were the further restrictions on displaced communities on their freedom of movement either in or out of the area, or into neighbouring forests for fuel and resource gathering.

For some women returning home following the fighting, changes in land distribution and transformations in property rights have found them having claim or re-claim access to their land and land-based resources. It is important to note the high percentages of women living in war damaged or temporary housing, having to manage life after being resettled without proper shelter.

For those living in stressed political situations, the displacement is more subtle but the dangers no less. Women from rural areas move to urban areas to seek work as displayed through the case studies in Aceh, Nepal and Fiji. While for some this is to 'avoid recruitment',

or sexual advances from the military, for others this is a matter of survival. While this is not displacement as in the former 'full blown' conflicts of Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Kyrgyzstan, the stresses and impacts on women inhibit full exercising of their social, economic, cultural and civic and political rights. Women in these situations find sustenance for themselves and their families difficult, find it challenging to find 'decent work' and are often economically and sexually exploited in their work place.

In Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Fiji and Aceh, over the last decade, tsunami and floods devastated parts of the countries where those that had already been ravaged by years of armed conflict and internal tensions lived, resulting in further devastation and loss of livelihood, land and livestock.

*When the conflict started the people of Kabal migrated to nearby villages that were safe then. The only source of income left at that time was the rent from Lubna and her husband's shops but these were damaged in the conflict. Their house was also damaged. Bombing and shelling during the military operation destroyed the schools that had not been destroyed by the Taliban. Lubna and her family went to Peshawar. There were no facilities when they arrived there. Then the situation worsened and all the people of Kabal became IDPs. Life was difficult and they were dependent on NGOs, army and others to give them food and other basic necessities of life. (Pakistan case Study).*

The experience of participants from Pakistan demonstrates the dependency on NGO's, INGO's and the army to provide food and other basic necessities of life.

The role of the State, INGO's, Humanitarian Agencies and NGO's figures highly at these points. If post-disaster reconstruction and rehabilitation is handled with sensitivity to the social, cultural and economic implications of resettlement, reconstruction and rehabilitation affected communities can come out of the experiences of trauma and tragedy with dignity and strength. However, what the case studies reveal is State and INGO responses are lacking in the area of rebuilding women's economic empowerment.

UNSCR 1325 calls for women's key contributions to relief and recovery to be recognized and valued. Humanitarian, early recovery and peace-building efforts that promote women's meaningful participation are more effective and can create opportunities to address gender inequality.

*UNSCR 1325 calls on all actors involved in negotiating and implementing peace agreements to recognize the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction.*

## Insecurity and Violence

Protracted insecurity, fear and violence abound throughout all the case studies; even so, these have to be seen as only glimpses of the impact this has on women's lives. Insecurity and violence in fact manifest in many ways with regards to the economic empowerment of women in conflict and conflict affected areas. Within the context of this study, focus groups and interviews were carried out with a great deal of sensitivity to ensure the safety of the women who attended and spoke as well as the local organisations working in the areas.

Conflict situations can create social and cultural environments in which women become embedded in constructs that impose restrictions on their social, economic and cultural rights. As witnessed and experienced by participants in these case studies, attitudes and perceptions of women within the dominant patriarchal and heteronormative framework are used to support and justify discrimination and violence against women. In some cases there is a growth in various forms of fundamentalism and extremism (whether political or militaristic) which strongly discriminates against women, and serves to justify violence against women, in others it manifests in violent attacks within the domestic or public sphere.

While sexual violence and rape are recognised as being used methodically and strategically as weapons of war (Askin, K D (2003)<sup>10</sup>), these behaviours continue, and in some cases increase in the period following cessation of armed conflict. Lack of mobility, ongoing monitoring of community movement and activities, and a high military presence, impact severely on women undertaking their daily tasks. Many women are subjected to random searches and investigations.

*Women faced sexual violence. During conflict, the Taliban used to have sex with women. According to one woman, "We heard many such stories and we were really scared about leaving our homes". Women report that the Taliban tried to give quick justice and helped some women to get their rights of inheritance. However they also negate such reports, "I don't believe in the justice of the Taliban. They were cruel and barbaric." According to women, as there was a restriction placed on women's mobility by the Taliban, they could not access their work place. (Pakistan Case Study)*

Women who have lost husbands and sons in conflict find themselves with the extra responsibilities of feeding and caring for families. Women who had not been able to register their marriages during the years of conflict are faced with losing rights to land, property and income. The legal status of children is questioned due to not being able to register their children because of the conflict. In Nepal, women have limited access to and control over property; in the post conflict phase a large number of widows and single heads of households find themselves placed in vulnerable situations. The economic and socio-cultural dependence of many women on male family members makes women even more vulnerable in conflict and conflict affected situations.

Women who have been disabled or injured through the conflict fall through the gaps, and are at the mercy of their family and communities for their daily needs.

During conflict, curfews imposed by the state or non-state combatants make it problematic to leave home, even for males, business and work suffers as in Pakistan; access to electricity and water became a problem.

*'Azmat (35 year old widow) and her family stayed in Swat. She says that they did not have enough money to leave Swat so they stayed there. Her income suffered, as people were afraid to leave their homes because of curfew. The army was everywhere and they could not leave their homes. "We had a very difficult time economically as my husband was the only earning member. I did not get any stitching orders as people had either left our village or were too afraid to come out of their houses. The whole community was suffering economically as most people found it difficult to get to their place of work."' (Pakistan Case study)*

<sup>10</sup> Askin, Kelly D. (2003) *The Quest for Post-Conflict Gender Justice in Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*; Vol 41, New York, 2003

Commercial sex work becomes a source of income for women and transgender women. Although considered illegal in many countries, it is regularly carried out in the 'dark' and the transactions happen 'secretly'. The sex workers discussed in this case study have identified lack of employment opportunities and the need to maintain a living as the reason for the existence of their work. Sex work, or bartering sex in return for food or services, heightens women's vulnerability to trafficking, violence and abuse.

In conflict and conflict affected areas, there is a 'black market' for goods and law and order breaks down, paving the way for an increase in criminal activities. Through the case studies, we have heard of incidences of women entering into the alcohol production market, which renders them open to arrest and violence.

Identified by participants in some of the case studies was the heavy use of alcohol by men and women. There were also multiple sexual relationships, 'early marriages' among teenage girls and boys, abandonment of young girls after marriage, early pregnancies, and multiple marriages. To date, there have been very poor legal and social mechanisms in place to respond adequately and sensitively to these issues. These gendered experiences were sometimes the outcome of the inability of men and women to rebuild their lives through dignified means. The restrictions on mobility where men and women could not travel to find work meant that people were forced to be within a small space unable to engage in income earning activities or drawing on neighbourhood or community social networks. Living with the constant fear of reprisals and disappearances takes its toll on the psychosocial wellbeing of families and communities. Additionally, men who expected to be heads of their households were unable to provide for their families. Traumatic experiences of the ordinary men, women and children were not acknowledged and this often led to deep feelings of helplessness and despair.

Post-disaster relief efforts and policy making sideline gender based violence. However, in some countries women friendly spaces have been established as spaces where women can access services, undertake activities and raise concerns that were generally difficult to express in a male dominated environment. Such spaces have also been used to raise awareness of human rights. In Pakistan, despite opposition from male community members, women have acknowledged these spaces as part of a process of empowering and healing.<sup>11</sup> Allowing women to link with each other and to initiate a debate at the public, media and community levels to increase awareness regarding Gender Based Violence (GBV) and develop strategies to minimize the same. Building confidence and raising self-esteem have also occurred, motivating women to become agents of change themselves to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and other forms of GBV. In Kyrgyzstan and in Pakistan, Women Friendly Spaces (WFS) have been used to enhance women's economic capacity and to bring together women from each side of the ethnic divide to work together, thus providing a space for reconciliation, discussion and healing as well as economic capacity building and provision of entrepreneurship skills.

As a result of financial stress, women take on the multiple burdens in trying to maintain the balance and upkeep of their family's security. This also includes women taking multiple roles in the family as well, either due to male unemployment or their partners not providing any support to sustain the family.

In order to deal with financial difficulties, women tend to strategise, particularly finding alternative ways such as using up their savings, taking out loans, withdrawing money from their superannuation schemes, using union membership benefits, and using family support to handle extra work related to their home. In Fiji for example, 75% of women interviewed have taken loans from banks and family members during family functions, for education, or finance for home maintenance or to build a new house. Further to this, 63% of these

<sup>11</sup> ShirkatGah (2011). *Keeping Adrift: Documenting Best Practices for Addressing Gender Based Violence from the Platform of Women Friendly Spaces*. Lahore, Pakistan.



women have indicated that as a result of taking the loans, they had to cut back on household expenses including utilities, groceries and buying clothes. For 6% of the women, their names were also listed in the Credit Bureau for 'bad credit'. Women who can no longer afford petrol or to use a car or taxis now have to rely on public transport, which in many cases is unsafe and doesn't run on time. Arriving home late at night renders women vulnerable to violence and abuse.

In a strongly male-dominant society, women and girls have fewer opportunities for education and employment and have a number of restrictions imposed on them (i.e. with regard to dress, and the ability to move freely both within and between villages). The conflict severely affects women and their access to a means of livelihood. Women already having limited and not accepted status in the workforce are further negatively affected by the conflict.

## Economic Security

The economic well-being of women is often measured based on their advancement in education, income, occupation and decision-making. When using a human rights based and a feminist approach, the power relations between men/women becomes quite obvious in determining women's economic status. This is directly linked to how women are able to make decisions and exercise their rights as identified in the international human rights laws particularly the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

All countries within this case study are signatory to the UN-CEDAW and party to a number of agreements and treaties including the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, Beijing Platform for Action, and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, for all 6 countries included in this inquiry, conflict and political unrest in its multiple forms, has greatly impacted on achieving significant progress in realisation of women's rights highlighted and agreed in principle to provide economic advancement to women.

This study is on women's 'productive work' which is monetised in that it specifically focuses on different sectors of women's paid work. All women workers in this study whether of the 'formal', 'informal' and 'subsistence' economies, as government workers, house-girls, market vendors, or farmers, exert effort to exchange their labour for money. A feminist economic model furthermore regards both women's paid 'productive' work and unpaid 'reproductive' work in the evaluation of women's economic status; this takes both monetary/economic and social relations (social values and networks) into account<sup>12</sup>.

As each of the case studies in this inquiry are at different stages of conflict, different opportunities for women occur in different ways. What shines through the case studies are the entrepreneurial opportunities that arise for some women in some contexts. In some cases women are entering into small business opportunities despite the major challenges that arise. What is blatantly obvious in these cases is that there is little, if any support, for women wishing to set up and grow business opportunities.

*In the case of informant B, she began to develop small scale sewing clothing business after obtaining training at an NGO. As her small business started to grow, she noticed that the village community members began to solicit her advice on increasing their own livelihood. Her confidence grew as she also started to play a more assertive role at the village level. Her major problem is to obtain more funds in order to increase her business since the business is micro finance project. She was able to obtain three loans, the maximum number allowed under the scheme provided by an NGO. (Aceh case study)*

<sup>12</sup> FWRM Draft Research Report on Women's Economic Status in Fiji, 2011

It is interesting to note that in post-conflict and post-war societies, opportunities arise for women to participate in what would be considered 'non-traditional' employment. Construction work, mechanics and other such work becomes available in rebuilding the physical aspects of the community. Women step into these roles, especially in areas with high numbers of female single heads of households.

Small business has been one way in which women have re-entered/entered the marketplace and gained confidence, self-esteem and social acceptance as well as control over income and assets. Women's enterprises tend to be relatively small, have informal structures, flexibility, low capital needs, modest educational requirements, high labour intensity, and depend on local raw materials. Self-employment in small-scale businesses presents a constructive option for income generation and many women involve their families in the different aspects of running of their businesses. Understanding and working with the ability of village customers who have little money and buy small quantities has allowed a gap in the market for some women to enter.

Rural women and men have different work experiences to those in urban contexts, often to the detriment of women. Women lag behind men in access to land, credit and a broad range of technologies, information, advisory services and training. They are frequently shut out of 'social capital' such as farmer's organisations, unions and community networks that can enhance productivity and growth. This is very clearly seen in the case studies from Aceh and Kyrgyzstan. Yet despite these limitations and the enormous burden of unpaid and mostly invisible work they provide at home and in family businesses every day, women make substantial contributions to feeding their families and building their communities. Gender inequalities in rural employment exist everywhere, regardless of the level of income, development in the country/region, but in the case of conflict affected societies, women suffer significant economic disadvantages to men. Sex-disaggregated data is needed to fill critical gaps in knowledge and to improve policy making processes and development agendas. Since gender differences in rural employment are many and often inter-related, a package of complementary policy measures is required, including legal reforms that promote gender equality. These are not often high on the agenda of a country coming out of conflict.

For some women who are single heads of households, small scale informal sector activities such as opening a stall in the evenings, have proven to be the pathway to economic activity and providing livelihoods for themselves and their families. It is in these stories that we see the role of NGOs strengthening women's roles in the economy through training, small scale loans schemes and micro financing. Women owned businesses can be strong vehicles for job creation and economic growth.

*In Banda Aceh for example, small businesses known as "Kios" sprung up with the availability of micro finance given by NGOs. Kios are small stores selling sundry household materials. The packages are small to accommodate the ability of the village customers to buy in small quantities. (Aceh Case study)*

However, while the training, support and small scale financing is reported as being good to start the long walk towards economic empowerment for many women, it also appears to trap them into small scale businesses. Participants reported that there was a need to support sustained long term growth of the business. *"Jualanbaju yang sayajahit semakin laris. Cumakurang mdoaluntukting katlagi"* (The Sale from the clothes that I sew is good, but I don't have more capital to increase business)" (Aceh Case Study) This was a sentiment reflected across 5 of the 6 case studies, especially where high interest loans were crippling to expand into broader business strategies.

**Hira Karmacharya, (30yrs), from Hetauda Municipality.** She has three daughters. Her husband was killed a decade ago by the Maoist. He used to work in the Government Investigation Department as telecom operator. Since then her hardships began in her life. She went and lived in the home of her birth. With the relief package she got from the government she started a small MOMO (dumpling) stall to sustain her family. She started it 8 years ago. She has invested Rs. 40,000, she earns about Rs. 1200 -1500 per day at present. She is very happy with her business as it is helping her to sustain her family. Furthermore, she feels this is an opportunity to become a good entrepreneur and economically independent. Earlier she was totally dependent and confined to private sphere only. She said HimRights reconciliation workshop and public hearing helped her to be self-confident and empowered. She feels more of this kind of programs should be conducted so conflict affected women could take leadership roles. Furthermore, she says that the government should provide loans without interest to promote women in business and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, she stressed those government initiatives should be focused on enhancing capacity of women entrepreneurs. (Nepal Case Study)

Women in each of the case study countries were asked to comment on their economic roles and pathways prior to conflict erupting. For some this was possible and for others not possible as they had been born into conflict and knew nothing else. It was found that women who had a fair level of independence and business opportunities prior to the conflict were not necessarily able to rebuild their businesses following cessation of conflict. Women in rural areas and in the agricultural sector were able, in some cases, to return to their fields, but in many cases they were only able to work during the daytime, living in fear of sexual attacks or being suspected as supporters of military factions or government (spies). There is a crucial need for women's economic empowerment in conflict affected situations however as reflected through the case studies, this is yet to be the priority of the government and other organizations in their policies and programs. The challenges for women in conflict and conflict affected societies are rooted in deeply patriarchal stereotypes about the roles of men and women in the society, economy and in politics. This is reflected in gender blindness in political, economic and financial decision making. State response across all case studies identify rebuilding of the economy following conflict, remains without gender analysis and this is reflected in policies and practices.

Lack of gender disaggregated data does not allow a clear picture of the situation of women in most of the countries surveyed. Businesses were impacted, but there is no picture of how many of those businesses were owned or operated by women. Lack of registration of businesses, or women not allowed to register businesses also causes challenges to compensation. In some cases, women who had owned successful businesses or low income businesses prior to the conflict, did not receive the payment as it went to the male head of household and was not necessarily used for rebuilding the business. Small scale entrepreneurs are amongst the hardest hit, losing not only businesses but also business opportunities and business partners. Some have not returned to their businesses post war, but have entered the civil service or sought other options to earn an income.

*'There is no discussion of the strengthening of the enabling environment for women's led business during conflicts.'* (Kyrgyzstan case study)

Women across all case studies reported increases in unpaid work and caring during and post conflict. Women continue to do more unpaid work in the home, there is a double workload for working women.

*In contemporary Fiji women continue to do more unpaid work in the home, there is a double workload for working women, as economically active females do an average of 26 hours of housework per week while economically active males only do 9, the average is 14 hours. The idea that men are breadwinners continues to hold as a norm in Fijian society, and masks women's economic contribution. Despite doing 52% of all time work done in the economy, women received only 27% of all income earned in the economy. The gender wage gap is 19%, and in general women are overqualified compared to men across all work areas.<sup>13</sup>. (Fiji Case Study)*

Due to high levels of unemployment, women find it difficult to negotiate for better work conditions. Thus fearing job loss, women continue to work with difficult situations such as taking on additional workload and taking work home, working overtime, and carrying additional responsibilities at work, opting to ignore difficult colleagues and supervisors who may be discriminatory towards them. Few have other sources of income.

Continuous political instability, poor governance structures, rises in global oil prices leading to high inflation which reduces income of people, pushing more people into poverty and unproductive use of fertile land, are key factors inhibiting the implementation of the MDGs and other international commitments across all case studies.

For all women, the greatest impact has been on purchasing power. In Sri Lanka this has resulted in women and their families eating two or less meals per day. In Fiji, women reported that the greatest economic impact on women has been on their purchasing power and directly related to their standard of living. With a low or no increment in wages, but increasing costs of living in Fiji, particularly food items and transport costs, women have identified that they were able to satisfy the basic needs of the family members previously but currently are finding it difficult to do so. For example, 81% of women interviewed indicated that their standard of living was better 5 years ago while 19% had additional income in the family, hence felt that their living standards in relation to meeting the daily expenses had improved. Additionally, in order to cope with the increase in food/fuel prices, 75% of these women had to cut costs on groceries, while 31% tried cutting costs of utility bills, and 38% reduced visits paid to family members/relatives, and 75% opted to travel by bus instead of taxis. This also meant waking up early to catch the bus in time to make it to the office on time. Other methods adopted include not buying the 'luxury' items in groceries such as butter, milk, peanut butter etc., and all of the women interviewed had indicated that they are eating meat less frequently. Increases in food prices or rise in costs of travelling, have affected women as they have to decide on what items will not be bought for the household, or how will they handle the changes in modes of transport. 100% of the women interviewed in Fiji, had to change their spending habits in the last 5 years, and all of them either minimized or totally stopped buying new clothes for themselves, as they saw it to be an unnecessary expense.

In both Pakistan and Fiji, civil service position tend to provide the most security for women, despite reports of sexual harassment, lack of promotion, low wages and poor working conditions. In all case studies, women reported suffering and unable to find work or earn a decent wage. (*The section above : Insecurity and violence, notes the vulnerabilities around commercial sex work and illegal earning activities such as brewing illicit alcohol.*)

For women in Sri Lanka, Nepal and Aceh the enormity of economic loss and the costs borne by the poorest of poor communities in the conflict affected areas during and after the state and militant groups engaged in armed warfare. This cost is often invisible or is not acknowledged. Recompense post cessation of warfare is little, sporadic and in no way covers the costs of rebuilding.

<sup>13</sup> Sic..



*In the two village studies (that is 10% of a sample population) women who were asked about asset losses during the two periods of dislocation and resettlement, 2006-2007 and 2008 said the most important livelihood assets that they had were ownership of cows, goats and chickens and motor cycles. We found that these women from among the poorest of the poor paid more than LKR 5 million for the war. This is merely an indicator of the extent of financial loss indicated by these women, based on the estimates that they were able to make. Even, allowing for a margin of error on these calculations, the financial losses suffered by these women are indeed substantial. For example, if we extrapolate that to the total village population, it becomes LKR 50 million (US\$ 400,000), and this is just two villages in the Batticaloa District. There needs to be an acknowledgement of scale of financial loss to these households which will then lend itself to be the basis on which women can demand for more resources to be allocated for them, their communities and the war affected regions. (Sri Lanka Case Study)*

For older women in Aceh, most were unable to read and write. Thus, immediately after the conflict they remained involved in agricultural activities, with few other options for employment.

State and INGO programs implemented in the aftermath of conflict do not respond to the enormity of the issues around poverty and economic vulnerability of women. While in some of the case study countries, there has been a call for special attention to be paid to widows and women head of households and in countries such as Sri Lanka, programs both government and donor, highlighted in this report have specifically targeted this group of women and made them a priority in receiving assistance. What was not clear, however, was whether the income generating activities provided to women in conflict affected areas is outside of “sex-stereotyped activities” such as sewing, small trading or beauty culture.

The case studies highlight the fact that many of the assistance programmes provide the same livelihood options and there is an oversupply (in this case small shops) in the village. The women assisted through these programmes also target the very poor as their market who have limited purchasing power to begin with.

While the focus on WHHs is commendable in these programmes as they represent one of the most vulnerable populations post-conflict, sensitivity is also needed to the situation of women who do not fit the WHH criteria, but are nevertheless prone to various hardships in conflict and conflict affected areas.

*“When women are identified as project beneficiaries, the major focus generally is on widows and female headed households ignoring the overwhelming majority of poor women who contribute to the household economy while bearing major responsibility in the domestic sphere’ (Article 14 CEDAW) (Sri Lanka Case study)*

Lack of gender disaggregated statistics and lack of gender analysis render programs piecemeal and sporadic, lacking cohesion and sustainability, with some projects organized in terms of incorporating poor communities into private sector led macro-production processes, such as organized agriculture, garment industries and macro fisheries projects.

*In 2009, women were particularly affected by the cheap vegetables that were flooding the local markets from outside the district, as they were unable to sell their own local produce. This was a very serious concern as women were struggling to recover from the devastation of the military offensive, months of displacement, loss of their assets and damages to their homes. (Sri Lanka case study)*

Conflict, with its direct impact on the physical ability of women (shooting, beaten, raped, tortured, displaced, etc.), has definitely limited income generating, employment chances and business development opportunities for most women. This is despite women being internationally recognised as crucial partners in shoring up the foundations of lasting peace; economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy<sup>14</sup>.

The research from Pakistan found that where a woman has been 'allowed' by the family/ husband to engage in economic activities and bring home an income, she has been respected both within the family and in the community. While women continue to be restricted in their mobility and also in the type of public spaces that they can be seen at, they are able to associate and support other women in counseling or arguing for education for daughters.

It is evident in post conflict situations that women are still suffering and unable to find work. In some cases, after military operations, men return to their labour work as there is a lot of reconstruction being undertaken, but in many cases women have been unable to find many opportunities for work. In some cases, workers were brought into the conflict and disaster affected areas from town and villages outside of the area which led to fewer jobs for those in the affected area.

*'Following the military operations [in 2009], there was a sudden flood of cheap labour from other districts which negatively impacted the work opportunities of the daily wage workers from the conflict affected villages in Batticaloa. Since the usage of machines in agriculture production has increased, the need for labour has reduced, leading to the reduction of work for daily wage earners in the agriculture sector.' (Sri Lanka case study)*

The challenge to women's economic empowerment during and after conflict is complex and multi layered. Challenges lie in domestic political recognition of women's social and economic activities; the issue of economic decision-making; rehabilitation in a post conflict situation; availability of financial resources; and patriarchy with its narrow social stereotypes stakeholders in the rehabilitation process.

The lack of recognition of women's economic decision-making on crisis related issues, including rehabilitation and reconstruction, is evident in the absence of women's issues both in the agendas of the State. The absence of a gendered approach is also often reflected through the donor community, with regard to the economic assistance programmes designed for during and after the conflicts. This is despite women's human rights conventions and treaties, and UNSCR 1325, clearly outlining the importance of a gendered approach in these areas. There are few, if any, discussions with women to identify needs and capacities, or on the diverse economic impacts on different categories of affected women. This in turn results in the lack of economic solutions addressing the different impacts of women.

Challenges in relation to access to financial resources include lack of budget allocation for women's issues, lack of allocation of financial support to the different target groups of

<sup>14</sup> United Nations, 'Women's Participation in Peacebuilding: Report of the Secretary General,' 7 September, 2010, A/65/354-S/2010/466

women affected by the conflict, a lack of women's participation in financial decision-making and a lack of analysis or understanding of the financial needs of women engaged in economic activities.

All these challenges are rooted deeply in patriarchal stereotypes about the role of men and women in the economy and, in politics. This leads to gender blindness of political, economic and financial decision-making results.

## **Representation of Women in Decision Making structures (within the household and in the community).**

Women's voice, inclusion and participation are at the core of CEDAW, BPFA, UNSCR 1325 and the MDGs. However, the case studies reveal that gender stereotypes and cultural patterns, which assign different roles and responsibilities to women and men in the public and private spheres, tend to restrict women's participation. Women's lack of equal access to education, training and productive resources also prevents them from equal power and economic decision-making. Empowering women begins with inclusion, and in the conflict and conflict affected areas, a creative and responsive array of mechanisms that include women and ensure that the activities undertaken respond to their needs and guarantee their rights.

The representation of women in decision making processes, from community level to engagement in structures of governance is a key element in women's empowerment. It is one of the pillars of UNSCR 1325 in the area of peace building and conflict resolution. Both CEDAW and the BPFA strongly advocate for specific policies that would recognize women's capacities in leadership and decision making. Accountability to gender equality and the inclusion of women across all areas is one of the founding principles of the MDGs. In the context of societies that are in conflict or emerging from conflict the case studies highlight that expanding women's engagement in economic activity has a positive effect on their status in households and society, and influences their ability to participate in decision-making.

In trying to link economic empowerment to the usage of various international instruments, one can focus on the understanding of vertical and horizontal integration. Economic empowerment of the various sectors in the society has been able to minimize the differences in terms of income distribution, cultural practices as well as territorial distance (horizontal integration). On the other hand, international instruments provide the mechanism where vertical integration can be facilitated between the more influential groups and the less fortunate groups, or State and community (through domestic legislation, policy and services) within the society.

The lack of women in decision-making around crisis related issues, including rehabilitation and matters of the economy are well documented through all the case studies and is reflected in the lack of women's issues being addressed in the economic assistance agenda of state and donors, during and after the conflict. Those in power do not appear to be applying a rights based framework.

In Fiji, the civil service is one of the largest employers with women dominating in fields of nursing, teaching and administration/clerical work. Women dominate the lower levels of the civil service though only a few are in decision-making levels. Even in the sub-sectors of health and education where women dominate as teachers and nurses, men dominate at decision-making levels in both the civil service and their respective unions<sup>15</sup>. Across all case studies, women were finding it difficult to negotiate for better work conditions fearing job loss, or in situations where work is allocated on a daily basis, fearing for future work options.

<sup>15</sup> Government of Fiji, 2008; Leckie, 1987, 2000, 2002

The work of local NGOs with a first-hand experience of the situation of women and communities in conflict and conflict affected areas is essential, as they are often the first to step in and work with affected communities. However, as International NGO's enter the affray, it has been reported that local NGOs often lose their staff to the larger INGO's that can pay better wages and have better working conditions and need expertise on the ground in the affected areas.

Local NGOs can provide a key role in forming bridges between government and community around key issues and informing women of their rights. A key successful strategy emerging through the case studies is the creation of Woman Friendly Spaces (WFS) these are discussed more broadly in the section of this report on Insecurity & Violence. These WFS's are used by women to access services, undertake activities and raise concerns that were generally difficult to express in a male dominated environment. Such spaces have also been used to raise awareness of human rights<sup>16</sup>. In situations where women, because of cultural taboos and mobility restrictions, have not been able to organise themselves to take part in structured dialogues to identify their evolving recovery needs and priorities, these spaces have become essential in learning new skills, building confidence, sharing information and enhancing decision making within the home.

An NGO in Banda Aceh (one of the organisational interviews in the Aceh case study) provides three programs: education, economic empowerment and media program. The program benefitted approximately 1000 women in terms of increase literacy, economic empowerment, and creative communications. Through the synergistic mode of the program, women are gaining confidence in terms of public speaking, and creative writing skills. Such transformations allow women to become more assertive in the public sphere. In the case of Informant C (see below), she indicated that she is confident in making suggestions at local village meetings. This indication is remarkable because the strong influence of the patriarchal system normally does not provide room for women to participate in the public sphere.

*"Program Tingkat kapasitas membuat saya lebihiyaki nuntukber dependengan publik" (The capacity building program increase my self-confidence when I have to speak in public)- Informant C – Aceh case study*

Increased caring duties, lack of financial support and a rising economy have resulted in women's increased strategising and decision making in the homes. Women's strong commitment to their responsibilities sees them take on extra work to ensure household needs are met. In the workplace most women cannot address grievances through formal processes, and so respond by making adjustments in spaces where it does not cause confrontation or ramifications at work. These decisions are having a severe impact on the health and well-being of women and their families.

*I had stopped taking hormonal tablets (for one year), decrease in shopping, stopped going to hospital, trying to be mindful of my health so I can avoid the cost of going to hospital. Now I save money to buy hormonal tablets to finish the transit (Sex Worker) (Fiji Case Study)*

*We don't buy meat regularly but eat meat only once week and don't buy milk anymore as we can't afford it. (Nurse) (Fiji Case Study)*

Continuous political instability, poor governance structures, rises in global oil prices leading to high inflation thus reducing income of people, pushing more people into poverty and unproductive use of fertile land, are key factors inhibiting the implementation of the MDGs and other international commitments across all case studies.

<sup>16</sup> Note : Women Friendly Spaces and their role in addressing Gender Based Violence is well documented in ; ShirkatGah (2011) 'Keeping Adrift : Documenting Best Practices for Addressing Gender Based Violence from the Platform of Women Friendly Spaces available at [pubs@sgah.org.pk](mailto:pubs@sgah.org.pk)



In Nepal, large numbers of marginalized and socially suppressed groups became aware of political and social issues. Many women, who used to be confined within the house and domestic chores only, walked over their threshold to join the war. After the end of conflict, women's involvement in decision making in household and social economic activities has increased. Furthermore, women have been an important part of social and economic activities. Women's involvement in cooperatives has brought about innumerable changes in women's awareness. It has not only organized women, but empowered them to take part in social activities like addressing violence against women, and human trafficking and mediation as part of HimRights Surveillance Group. They are working actively as a local informal justice providers and social workers. Furthermore, they are now economically independent which has increased their self-esteem and leadership skills as well.

Women reported throughout the study that programs that offered opportunities for training, learning new skills, business development, and public speaking, not only allowed women to participate more successfully within the economic and productive fields, but also served to build confidence. Women reported small changes in gender relations within the home and community when they participate in economic activities that benefit both the family and the community. Such transformations allow women to become more assertive in the public sphere.

In Sri Lanka, the protracted ethnic conflict compounded by the 2004 Tsunami which affected the Eastern coast of Sri Lanka, including Batticaloa severely brought together a number of women's organisations to form the Women's Coalition for Disaster Management (WCDM) in the East of Sri Lanka. This coalition played an important role highlighting issues faced by women survivors of the conflict, and the tsunami, and has kept its identity and its activities in the public arena over the past 8 years. The coming together of women to take up economic, political and social issues that affect women survivors of the conflict and natural disasters with government officials, NGOs and international donor agencies and International NGOs exemplifies the possibilities of collective actions and interventions that are necessary and effective.

***Tika Devi Humagain, 46, from Hetauda (Nepal)*** - Status of Tika Devi's husband is still unknown after he was abducted by Maoists during armed conflict. He was accused of being a spy. Her family was displaced to Hetauda from Rautahat district for safety and security. She has two daughters and a son. Her older daughter is physically disabled and she is provided with education support by HimRights. There is no remarkable improvement in her family economic status since their displacement. She sells popcorn, roasted peas, soybeans, chickpeas on a pushcart. She says, "It is very difficult for me to send my children to school, more difficult is to run household chores and ends meet." However, she is managing her household needs with whatever she earns from small street business. She hopes to expand her business if she can borrow some money at a reasonable interest rates. She is not engaged with any of the local saving and credit groups, however, she has been able to save a small amount in her bank. She is happy with whatever she has been doing and proudly shares about her business to others. She participates in many of the programs organized for conflict victims. Her self-confidence had increased after participating in such programs. She used to think that girls do not need education. But now, she is trying to send her elder daughter to school. This transformation has come with the experiences she has gone through.

*Her business is going on well. She is of the opinion that everyone has right to live with dignity. She says, "We should get engaged with income generating activities instead of staying doing nothing. (Nepal Case Study)*

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One of the greatest challenges facing women in decision making outside of the home is the mindset of men who do not appreciate the capability of women in decision-making. In Aceh, informants expressed the fact that *‘they have to manage well in order to be able to participate in activities outside the households.’*

Sustainability of women’s economic roles in the rebuilding of countries following conflict is not considered as part of a country’s security and broader economic planning. Gender blindness in policies and legislation, lack of women in decision-making positions and bodies had led to women’s economic empowerment being left out of the national security and country development planning (Kyrgyzstan Case study). Where women are present, they are in small numbers and are often left out of high level planning and decision making.

The Pakistan case study gives some insights on how women see themselves as actors in society in the face of immense pressure on their mobility as well as their identities as mothers, grandmothers, daughters and sisters. Socio-cultural norms that restrict women’s agency outside of the confines of the home became a focus of attention during the period of ‘Talibanisation’; in the post conflict period, interventions of the State and of other parties appear to have not made effective efforts to recognize women’s roles as decision makers and peace negotiators in their communities and in society in general. Tabassum, (35 year) said that although women in her family have permission to education and work, there are still a lot of cultural and customary taboos on her mobility and decision-making. She is not allowed any independence to make decisions for her own life or even have a say in whom to marry. But once a woman starts earning she gets a lot of respect in her family and in laws, but her status does not change. In some communities women who work are looked down upon. Most women spend their money on their family and in their homes.

**Sajida** (35 year old married woman) says that women are the silent majority of Swat. They are never consulted and the men make all decisions. Women are the invisible ones. No one consults them, but decisions are made for them. There are no community groups of women where they can come together and talk about their problems or be guided on how to and where to seek help from. Women do not inherit anything in Swat and if they ask for their share from their brothers or fathers, they are ostracized and then have no support left in society. So they prefer to keep quiet. Most people do not even consult the mothers about the future of their children whether it is about their education or work or marriage. If a father does not allow his daughters to be educated the mother has to comply even if she wants her educated. The Taliban were cruel and barbaric and used women by brainwashing them with Mullah Fadlullah<sup>17</sup> Radio messages. He only gave orders and did not want the opinion of the women who were suffering not only by the restriction on their mobility, but also because of the killing of their loved ones. (Pakistan case study)

<sup>17</sup> Head of Taliban in Swat (2011)



## Conclusions

There is now a proliferation of mechanisms, policies and laws that speak to human rights protection during conflict situations, including some that pay particular attention to the protection of women and of women's rights in times of conflict as well as in transitional and post-conflict moments. However, women active in the promotion of peace and the protection of women's human rights express general frustration about the capacity of these mechanisms and instruments to provide real change on the ground for women whose lives have been subject to permanent and often terrible changes due to conflict. The lack of significant improvements in the situation of women in conflict situations continues to be a matter of grave concern.

It is clear from these case studies, that in conflict and conflict affected societies, there is a need to move from a framework which focusses solely on violence and on the 'protection' of women, to a framework that is centred around the 'protection of women's rights' in all shapes and forms. This framework should engage with the multiple effects of conflict in the social, economic, political, cultural and civil areas, as well as engaging with the complex psychological and ideological changes that result from conflict and transition. Strengthening and building on existing human rights conventions and frameworks could play a critical role in supporting and protecting women through all states of conflict.

Throughout all case studies the economic empowerment of women depends on each women's individual circumstances; the nature of the conflict; the specificities of the ideologies and aims of parties to the conflict; the political environment for democratic governance; and whether or not there are policies and institutions that are conducive to women's empowerment.

The consequences of economic stress are fractious on peace and well-being. It is a determinant of violence in the household. Women's strong commitment to their responsibilities sees them take on extra work to ensure household needs are met. In the workplace most women cannot address grievances through formal processes, and so respond by making adjustments in spaces where it does not cause confrontation or ramifications at work. The impact of this on the well-being of women and whole communities is seen throughout the case studies.

Local leaders and local NGO's can do a lot to promote an enabling environment for women's empowerment, which in turn can have significant effects on the women's roles in household and community relationships. This is best demonstrated by projects aiming to improve women's access to capital, and the creation of Women Friendly Spaces to learn, network and build business. Economic empowerment depends on more than the provision of financial services alone. To expand opportunities for women's economic empowerment in conflict and conflict affected societies there is a clear need to improve and expand women's access to finance and low interest rate loans; to support home based businesses and to create women friendly spaces for women to share information, build networks and business links and share information and strategies.

Improving women's legal status and rights is a key ingredient to creating and sustaining an enabling environment for women's empowerment. Land and property rights are the most important assets for households in developing countries, in particular for poor households. People who own and control assets, such as land and housing, have more economic security and are more likely to take economic risks, thus benefiting from financial returns. Owning land is crucial to cultural identity, political power and participation in decision-making, and has direct economic benefits as a source of income, a key input for production and as collateral for financial and credit services.<sup>18</sup>

Implementing the provisions of CEDAW, BPFA and UNSCR 1325 of inclusion and participation of women in decision-making, especially in the area of economic empowerment and economic rehabilitation is an imperative for governments working to enhance the lives of people survivors of conflict. Supporting national fora for women to convene on macro economic policy and trade will not only serve to enhance gender equality but serve to strengthen the national economy during transition.

Economies in crisis rebuild on the backs of small businesses. Many small business owners are women. Through these case studies we have seen examples of situations where in the darkest of times, the light of entrepreneurship has served to bring sustenance to a family. Supporting women in business makes sense, especially in a country ravaged by warfare and where large numbers of widows and women head of households.

Human rights systems have the potential, to respond to a wide range of issues affecting women in conflict and conflict affected areas. In order to strengthen the protections and rights of women and girls in conflict and conflict affected areas, it is imperative to capture the diversity in the type and nature of the conflict, and the various roles that states, non-state actors, international organisations, families communities and the individuals themselves play in them. Prioritising the realization of gender equality and, supporting women's economic empowerment in conflict and conflict affected areas could accelerate progress towards achieving the MDGs.

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<sup>18</sup> *Innovative Approaches to Women's Economic Empowerment*, UNDP (2008); paper for the partnership event on September, 25, 2008 MDG3 – Gender Equality and empowerment of women – a prerequisite for achieving all MDGs by 2015 p 75. Downloaded [http://content.undp.org/go/cms-service/stream/asset/?jsessionid=aat7pLjKjmf4?aset\\_id=2524504](http://content.undp.org/go/cms-service/stream/asset/?jsessionid=aat7pLjKjmf4?aset_id=2524504)



## Strengthening the Human Rights Framework

Promoting gender equality and empowering women is embedded in the Millennium Declaration, and is one of the eight MDG's. It is also strongly argued that equality and women's empowerment are critical to achieving the MDG's. This study supports the comprehensive and indispensable use of CEDAW, the BPFA and UNSCR 1325 frameworks, already endorsed by the countries under study, to ensure MDG implementation.

The Millennium Development Goals have the potential to support a rights-based approach through their emphasis on investment in public goods such as health; education, water and sanitation and other infrastructure and their explicit call for gender equality. Indeed in 2005, Kofi Anan (former Secretary General of the UN) noted that development, security and human rights go hand in hand.<sup>19</sup>

By strengthening the Human Rights Framework there is the potential to:

- draw on rich data and analysis generated in the CEDAW, BPFA and UNSCR 1325 review processes to inform gender equality and women's priorities in relation to all MDG's;
- draw on CEDAW and BPFA to frame MDG targets and indicators across all goals;
- upscale tried and tested strategies under CEDAW and BPFA to inform National Development Policies, Plans and Programmes to achieve MDG's;
- draw on the CEDAW, BPFA and UNSCR Resolutions on Women Peace and Security monitoring and review processes to draw attention to MDG related progress and challenges in delivering on gender equality and women's empowerment; and,
- ensure that MDG resources are adequately allocated and spent on gender equality and women's empowerment concerns.

This information can be used :

- at the national level to influence policies and programmes,
- by International aid agencies to strengthen gender equality across country programmes and by building in gender responsive reporting on programs
- at the local level to inform women's groups on their rights and allow them the information to claim their rights.

While the extent to which gender and women's rights are dimensions of each of the MDG's, is open to discussion. This study highlights the specific area of women's economic empowerment in conflict affected areas and how women's rights could be used to strengthen the delivery of the MDG's. To this purpose, this study promotes the use of the substantive articles of CEDAW, CEDAW General Recommendations, the 12 critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action and the principles enshrined within UNSCR 1325 to specifically strengthen a human rights framework for the economic empowerment of women in conflict affected societies and to strengthen women's rights and development into the peace, stability and prosperity of their countries.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations 2005 'In Larger Freedom Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All' <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/chap1.htm>

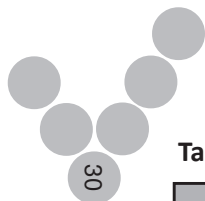


Table 3 : Strengthening the Human Rights Framework

MDG Goals	Related CEDAW Article(s)	CEDAW General Recommendations	Related Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) Critical Area of Concern	UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) S/RES/1325 (2000)
Goal 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Articles 1 (Discrimination), 2 (Policy measures) and 5 (Sex role stereotyping and prejudice) are relevant to all MDGs.  Article 3 Guarantee of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, including from hunger.  Article 7 Political and public life  Article 8 Representation  Article 11 Employment  Article 14 Rural women	No 5 1988 Temporary special measures, affirmative action, preferential treatment and quotas, in education, economy, politics and employment.	A . Women and poverty – the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women. Strategic objectives A1, A2, A3 and A4	Utilizing the principles enshrined within UNSCR 1325: Prevention; Participation; Protection. Reflecting these principles through all relief and recovery programmes.
Goal 2 Achieve universal primary education		No 6 1988 Effective national machinery to advise on the impact on women or policies and monitor the situation of women.	B. Education and training of women Strategic objectives B3, B4, B5 and B6	Specifically <i>Calls on</i> :
Goal 3 Promote gender equality and empower women		No 9 1998 Statistical data on women to be presented separately for women and men.	D. Violence Against Women Strategic objectives D1 and, D2	8. All actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including, inter alia:
Goal 8 Develop a global partnership for development		No 12 Violence against women – States parties to protect women against violence in the family, at work or in social life.	E. Women and Armed Conflict Strategic objectives E1, E4, E5 and E6	(a) The special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction;
		No 16 Unpaid women workers in rural and urban family enterprise.	F. Women and the economy Strategic objectives F1, F2, F3, F4, F5 and F6	10. All parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict
			G. Women in power and decision making Strategic objectives G1 and G2	
			H. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women Strategic objectives H1, H2, H3	
			I. Human Rights of Women Strategic objectives I1, I2 and I3	15. <i>Expresses</i> its willingness to ensure that Security Council missions take into account gender considerations and the rights of women, including through consultation with local and international women's groups
			L. Girl Child Strategic objectives L4, L5, L7 and L8	

# Annex A :

## Surviving Waves of Displacement, Batticaola District Sri Lanka

### Case Study : K Village, Batticaola District, Sri Lanka

The women interviewed in K village spoke of two big waves of conflict related displacement they had lived through. The first one was in 1990 when 64 out of the 77 women interviewed (83.1%) noted that their families had been displaced out of their village. Out of these 64 women, 34 (53%) had been displaced for six or more months, 26 (40.6%) had been displaced for a year or more, and 16 (25%) had been displaced for three or more years. In the entire survey 16 out of the 77 women (20.1% or 2 out of every ten women) had not been able to return to their own homes and schools for three or more years. 30% of those 64 women displaced by the 1990 conflict had been young girls (*the age range was between 4 and 6 years in 1990*) during this time and had to deal with the hardships of displacement and violence as children.

The second wave of major displacement for them took place in 2007 and this time every single woman interviewed (accept one) stated that they were affected. Most of the women interviewed (97.4%) stated that they were displaced for three or more months.

When the floods took place in January 2011, they were affected yet again. 94.8% of those interviewed stated that they were displaced for a time frame of 3 weeks or more.

When understanding the experiences of women who lived in the K village, 63 women interviewed (82%) stated that they were displaced by all three of these major events. In other words, 8 out of every 10 women had been affected again and again having to rebuild all over again. In very rural and poor areas women had lost their assets, homes and livelihoods such as livestock. They also lost their harvests. After going back to their damaged homes, they faced many restrictions to engage with their normal livelihoods such as fishing, collecting honey, chena cultivation (slash and burn), paddy farming, collecting firewood and growing vegetables.

The cost of war paid by ordinary civilians in the resettlement areas has been their systematic spiral into chronic poverty, loss of assets, debt, and slow malnutrition. The inability to earn a decent income from traditional occupations has also meant that people have resorted to other forms of work such as brewing illicit liquor. There have also been some instances where women have had to engage in sex work to be able to earn an income. Following the military operations, there was a sudden flood of cheap labour from other districts which negatively impacted the work opportunities of the daily wage workers from the conflict affected villages in Batticaloa. Since the usage of machines in agriculture production has increased, the need for labour has reduced, leading to the reduction of work for daily wage earners in the agriculture sector.

In the coastal areas of Batticaloa, local fishermen were also concerned about the big boats which were now coming into their waters from other parts of the country. Women were particularly affected by the cheap vegetables that were flooding the local markets from outside the district, as they were unable to sell their own local produce. This was a very serious concern as women were struggling to recover from the devastation of the military offensive, months of displacement, loss of their assets and damages to their homes.

During the time of displacement and resettlement, village people had to acquire a pass from the military to go out to cut firewood. This affected their livelihoods very much. It also limited their access to fuel which had huge impacts on women's lives. Mobility was severely controlled. They could only collect a small amount of firewood in the limited time they were permitted to enter the forest; therefore, their earnings from the sale of firewood also decreased. Sometimes they had to pay money to get the pass from the military personnel. Even if they got the pass and went to the forest, collected firewood, and sold it, their income was less than the money they had spent for the pass. These realities highlighted the micro-level corruption and war-economies that functioned during (2007-2009) (see also story of V below).

*V and her 4 children were left by her husband before the resettlement. Amidst many challenges she managed to collect firewood to sell, and brought up her children. After the resettlement her livelihood was disturbed because of the restrictions to go to the forest. When she went to get a pass from the army personnel to go to the forest she was made to have sex with that officer. Because of this close relationship she gave birth to a child. She was afraid that after the baby was born society would marginalize her and she buried the child alive. Later this incident came to light and the body was recovered and legal action was taken against her. The army officer was remanded for one month and after that released. (Focus group discussions in resettlement area 2009).*

They were facing difficulties in doing chena cultivation as well. The army was not allowing them to do cultivation in the forest. They were unable to protect the crops from the wild animals as they had no permission to stay overnight in the chena land. Due to this their income through the cultivation was drastically reduced. Many times, when men went to the forests to collect honey or firewood they were captured and taken into military camps and tortured. The military feared that the village people were helping the militants hiding in the forests by transporting food and water to them. Therefore, the village people were only allowed to carry one meal and one bottle of water. This meant that they could not stay long in the forests to collect honey, fruits or firewood. They were also not able to protect their grazing livestock in the nights.

Those villages which used to engage in fishing also faced many security restrictions. Fishing boats were not allowed to move far into the sea. Also they were given a very limited time within which they had to fish and return home. If they were found to be out of their village, they were captured by the military, "on suspicion".

Due to the lack of work and restrictions to work and mobility, people were involved in preparing arrack (illicit liquor) and other homemade arrack to earn an income. This has led to other social problems such as domestic violence.



## Annex B :

# Country Case Studies

### Aceh

Country : Aceh (Special Region of Indonesia)  
Area of case study : Banda Aceh



**A**ceh is a special region of Indonesia, located on the northern tip of the island of Sumatra. It is an Islamic province with a population of 4.6 million.

The province of Aceh has been entangled in conflict with the federal government of Indonesia since its integration into the Republic of Indonesia in 1949. There was major escalation of violence that took place between 1989 and 1998 when the government of Indonesia declared Aceh as Daerah Operasi Militer (DOM) and subsequent imposition of laws brought about minimal development in Aceh. Due to the inability to come to an agreement, in 1976 the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) under the leadership of Hasan Muhammad Ditiro was formed to fight for the independence of Aceh. The conflict escalated between 1989-1998 when the federal government declared Aceh as the Daerah Operasi Militer (DOM) or the Military Operation Region. After 1998, during the Reformasi period in Indonesia, there was a second escalation of violence. A total of 11,214 cases of human rights violation were reported to have taken place between 1989-2004. The situation changed when Aceh was hit by the 2004 tsunami which resulted in the loss of over 170,000 lives, and the destruction of 500,000 homes. The calamity brought the armed conflict to a halt. The aftermath of tsunami saw the beginning of another round of negotiation that resulted in the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (Helsinki MOU) that was signed on August 15, 2005 between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement.

The Helsinki Memorandum 2005 saw the commencement of the 2006 general elections where the Acehnese elected the Governor and the Deputy Governor under a peaceful environment. In line with the MOU, the process of reintegration was initiated and has not been completed. The implementing body is known as the Badan Reintegrasi Aceh (BRA) or the Aceh Reintegration Agency. The agency is responsible with three major tasks: the reintegration of GAM combatants through political, cultural and economic means, the development of victims of through economic empowerment, and the reintegration of Aceh into the Republic of Indonesia in the post arm conflict.

## Methodology for Research Study

- Desk review
- Focus group (total 5 women)
- 3 key person interviews

In order to achieve the objectives of this research, the researcher conducted a literature review on the topic. After analyzing the available secondary data, the researcher visited Banda Aceh in October 2011. In Banda Aceh, the researcher was able to observe Banda Aceh 6 years after the tsunami struck the city and the signing of the Helsinki Memorandum 2005.

Primary data was collected from some in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. In depth interviews were conducted with three women; a woman parliamentarian, an NGO representative, and a corn seller. These interviews were coupled with a focus group discussion involving 5 women from the age of 28-44. Three were single mothers and two were married. All the women have children from the age of 6-16. One of the single mothers was two months pregnant, and lost her husband during the tsunami.

The researcher also utilized interview data conducted in an earlier study in 2009 and 2010 by a study team from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Data from this earlier study took into consideration impact of the conflict on the political, economic and social dimensions on women in Banda Aceh. However, in this study, the focus is on economic empowerment of women. The researcher uses a semi-structured questions format in order to solicit views from the women within the focus group.

## Key findings

This case study reveals the different experiences and survival strategies that women were compelled to resort to in the face of armed conflict and natural disaster. Given the end of the conflict was brought about due to a tsunami, this case study highlights the political complexities of research in such societies. As with Sri Lanka, the tsunami devastated parts of the country that had already been ravaged by years of armed conflict and internal tensions. For the women in this study, the impacts of personal loss, financial/property loss, displacement and loss of self-esteem have direct bearing on their economic status and role in society.

While studies on women in Aceh indicate that the strong role of religion coupled with deep set patriarchal belief systems have sidelined women in the political sphere<sup>20</sup> (Edriana Noerdin, 2005), there appears little documented studies on the economic empowerment of women after the signing of the Helsinki MOU in 2005 despite economic empowerment being seen as one of the three pillars of reintegration within this Memorandum.

Participants in the study reported personal loss in terms of death of family members and friends resulted in the disruption of extended societal support which is crucial to women, especially in terms of crises. One woman lost her husband to the tsunami, one experienced divorce after the tsunami. The loss of a husband in Aceh leads to women becoming the sole providers and care givers in the family, especially for the elderly.

The long-term conflict in Aceh (1976-2004) has deprived one generation of basic human rights such as personal freedom, education, economic sustainability and protection from harm. This was evident from the experiences of women who are married with children and due to lack of education during their own childhood as a result of Aceh being in conflict and the poor delivery of basic services during this time, has deprived them of bettering their livelihood opportunities now.

<sup>20</sup> Edriana Noerdin. (2005)  
*Politik Identitas Perempuan*  
Aceh; Jakarta: Women  
Research Institute.

Women who worked in agricultural areas prior to and during the conflict have been able to continue their economic activities, mainly through work in paddy fields. However due to restriction of movement there has been heightened insecurity and a suggestion by participants of heightened personal violence, especially with daughters and girls in such areas. Previously, younger girls were sent by their families to live in Medan or Malaysia with other family members to avoid “unwanted attention” by the armed forces. However, during conflict due to the restrictions imposed by the military, freedom of movement during the conflict has been restricted and women and girls experienced “unwanted attention” from the military, and other male members within their areas.

Other participants, who were married with children, have found now that society is in transition, there is a need to increase their economic capacity in order to support the educational needs of their children. However, they are finding that the inaccessibility to education during their own childhood is a hindrance in advancing their economic positions. Lack of registration of a marriage and children with the authorities due to the conflict is resulting in particular challenges as this has implications on property distribution and the legal status of their children.

Small business has been one way in which women have re-entered / entered the marketplace and gained confidence, self-esteem and social acceptance. One informant reported developing a small scale sewing business, another, a small store selling sundry household materials. Many women involve their families in the running of their businesses. Understanding and working with the ability of village customers who have little money and who buy small quantities of



goods, has allowed a gap in the market for this women to enter. Rural women come to town to sell crops on small market stalls along the seafront, have also supported women's earning capacity. For some women single head of households, small scale informal sector activities such as opening a stall in the evenings near the beach walkway, have proven to be the pathway to economic activity. It is in these stories that we see the role of NGO's strengthening women's roles in the economy through training, small scale loans schemes, micro financing.

However, while the training, support and small scale financing is reported as being good to start the long walk towards economic empowerment for many women, it also traps them into small scale businesses. Some participants reported that there was a need to support sustained long term growth of the business. *“Jualanbaju yang sayajahitsemakinlaris. Cumakurangmdoaluntuktingkatlagi”* (The Sale from the clothes that I sew is good, but I don't have more capital to increase business)”

Through interviews conducted, one can summarize that there has been a slow but steady progress toward economic growth in Banda Aceh. Women indicate that they do see opportunity as well as access to better training to equip themselves with appropriate tools increasing their livelihood. However, there are various barriers that women still face especially those that are linked to religion, and the patriarchal system.

What appears lacking for women is a secure space for women to conduct their business, both with other women and with men. In Banda Aceh, men make decisions and hold their meetings in Kedai Kopi (Coffee Shops). These coffee shops do not provide a conducive environment for women to frequent often, and thus, women lose out in making business deals as well as participating in policy/political participation.

In trying to link between economic empowerment and the usage of various international instruments, one can focus on the understanding of vertical and horizontal integration. Economic empowerment of the various sectors in the society has been able to minimize the differences in terms of income distribution, cultural practices as well as territorial distance. On the other hand, international instruments provide the mechanism where vertical integration can be facilitated between more influential groups, and the less fortunate groups within the society. In interviews with a woman parliamentarian and a director of an NGO, different perspectives were given in terms of the usage of international instruments as tools to reintegrate women into society in the aftermath of conflict. The woman parliamentarian expressed her optimism in the future participation of women in politics, but recognized the socio-cultural barriers faced by women in their participation in the public sphere. The Director of the NGO believed that CEDAW and other instruments can be better utilized by policy makers to champion the needs of women.

Despite the gains over the last seven years, horizontal integration has not been achieved since the 2005 Helsinki MoU was signed. More importantly, there is also the issue of vertical integration within the society. In this case while the structure has been more open for political participation, generally men tend to benefit from the present laws within the land. At the grassroots level more openings are available for people to express their opinion in decision making processes, but not women who are still considered to be primarily family oriented within the private sphere, and due partly to lack of public space, out of the mainstream public sphere.

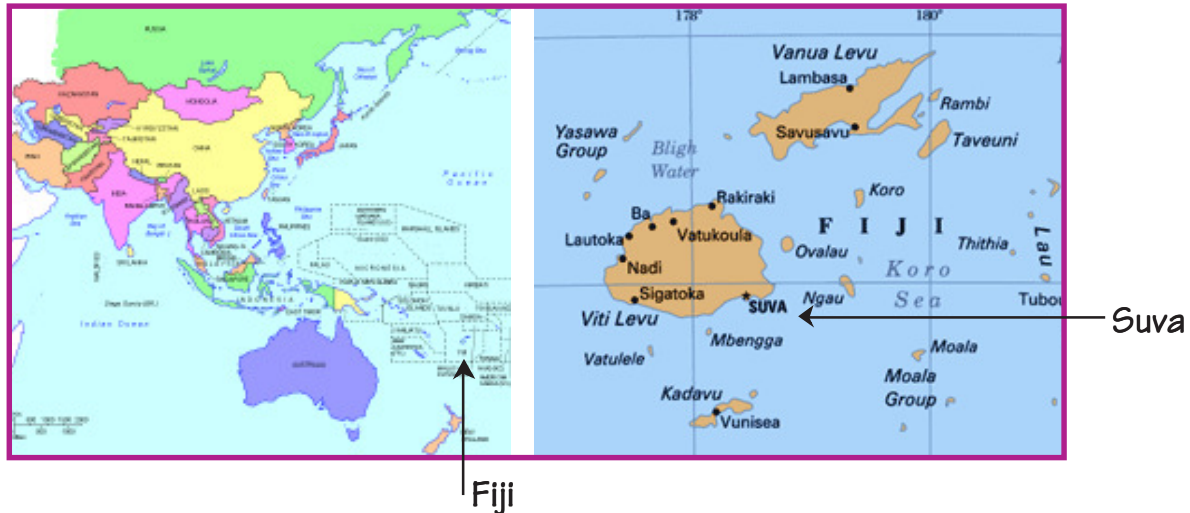




# Fiji

Country : Fiji

Areas of case study : Navua, Suva, Nasinu and Nausori



Fiji is a Melanesian island group located in the South Pacific. The capital of Fiji is Suva (pop. 77,366). Fiji's population was estimated in 2000 at 832,494; it is expected that by 2014, Fiji's population will have passed the million mark. Relatively high standards of health care have given Fijians a life expectancy at birth of 67.94 years, with an infant mortality rate of 14.45 per 1,000, the population remains young; about 34 % of the population is clustered between the ages of 5 and 20.

Fiji's ethnic composition is largely split between indigenous Melanesian Fijians (51 percent), and those of Indian descent (44 %); the remaining 5 percent is comprised of Europeans, Chinese, and other Melanesians. Fiji's religious situation reflects this division: 52 percent are Christian (including 37 percent Methodist and 9 percent Roman Catholic), 38 percent Hindu, and 8 percent Muslim. The proportion of Fijian Indians in the population has been decreasing since 1987, when army forces allied with indigenous Fijians staged a coup against the Fijian Indian led government.<sup>21</sup>

The most recent coup took place on December 5, 2006 when the military, led by Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, overthrew the democratically elected government, led by Laisenia Qarase. The military commander claimed to invoke the 'doctrine of necessity', defending the actions of the military by citing this legal precedent. The Commodore called the takeover a "clean up campaign" accusing the Qarase led government of being corrupt and racist.

Various religious bodies and members of the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) labelled the coup as illegal. Religious bodies tried to sway soldiers with addressing them as being evil. This led to the GCC being disbanded on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December 2006 and a Public Emergency Regulations being implemented. There is also a strict restriction in place for religious groups particularly the Methodist Church to hold any form of meetings or the church ministers to travel abroad. 4<sup>th</sup> January saw the President being reinstated, and there was mixed reactions from various political parties and Associations. The following day, Commodore Bainimarama became the interim Prime Minister.

<sup>21</sup> Note : Fijian Indians are primarily the descendants of Indian indentured labourers brought to Fiji by British colonizers between 1879 and 1916



2007 marked the beginning of the new regime under the military rule. In its attempt to seek legitimacy the military appointed Government from the beginning tried to reassure the economy due to high levels of foreign debts and international donors and investors of its 'clean up campaign' to get rid of corruption in Fiji. Despite pressure from international communities for the military to return to democracy, there were no talks on holding elections. As such, Fiji lost millions of dollars in European Union aid for its sugar industry under the Interim-Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) (and which was arguably the only reason Fiji signed the Interim-EPA agreement). This development aid in conjunction with a trade deal was money essential for the strengthening of the sugar industry<sup>22</sup>. This was a serious blow to the economy as the prospect of financial gain was arguably the only reason Fiji signed the Interim-EPA agreement. The decline of the sugar industry is arguably at the heart of the decline in GDP, and the poverty hardship being faced in rural Fiji. This situation has disproportionately impacted the most vulnerable, often women and their children.

## Methodology for Research Study

- Desk review
- Key person interviews

This case study examines women's existing experiences in work in the on-going conflict in Fiji. This study investigates women's experiences in two sectors where women play a significant role in Fiji including: women in civil service (teachers, nurses, and administration staff) and sex workers. "Work", constitutes both paid and unpaid work, as the two are inseparably intertwined. Paid work is identified by sector, and unpaid work is all the other work that is done for the household, family or cultural expectations; unpaid work is fundamental to the functioning of the economy, as we know it<sup>23</sup>.

This study is largely based on the draft research<sup>24</sup> conducted by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) in 2011 and looks at the economic status of women in Fiji in a much larger scale. The majority of the discussions and information are based on the findings and recommendations of this research. In addition, existing information and research statistics is also used to substantiate the findings of this study. Apart from this, analysis of the in-depth interviews carried out in the Central/Eastern Division in Fiji namely Navua, Suva, Nasinu and Nausori in September 2011, is also included in this study.

## Key findings

This case study is on women's 'productive work' which is monetised in that it specifically focuses on different sectors of women's paid work. All women workers in this study whether of the "formal", "informal" and "subsistence" economies, as government workers, house-girls, market vendors, or farmers, exert effort to exchange their labour for money. A feminist economic model furthermore regards both women's paid 'productive' work and unpaid 'reproductive' work in the evaluation of women's economic status; this takes both monetary/economic and social relations (social values and networks) into account<sup>25</sup>.

In contemporary Fiji women continue to do more unpaid work in the home. There is a double workload for working women, as economically active females do an average of 26 hours of housework per week, while economically active males only do 9, the average is 14 hours.<sup>26</sup> The idea that men are breadwinners continues to hold as a norm in Fijian society, and masks women's economic contribution. Despite doing 52% of all time work done in the economy, women received only 27% of all income earned in the economy.<sup>27</sup> The gender wage gap is 19%, and in general women are overqualified compared to men across all work areas.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Lal, 2007. Page 15

<sup>23</sup> Definition adopted from FWRM Draft Research Report on Women's Economic Status in Fiji, 2011

<sup>24</sup> The research report was still in draft form and going through an editing process during the compilation of this case study

<sup>25</sup> FWRM Draft Research Report on Women's Economic Status in Fiji, 2011

<sup>26</sup> Narsey, W. (2007). Gender Issues in Employment Underemployment and Incomes in Fiji. Suva, Vanuavou Publications. P. xi.

<sup>27</sup> Narsey, W. (2007). Gender Issues in Employment Underemployment and Incomes in Fiji. Suva, Vanuavou Publications. P. X.

<sup>28</sup> When educational attainment is compared to usual work activity (wage earner, salary earner, employer, self-employed, community worker, handicapped, household work, unemployed) women are generally more qualified than men in every area. Narsey, W. (2007). Gender Issues in Employment Underemployment and Incomes in Fiji. Suva, Vanuavou Publications. P.27

In Fiji the civil service is one of the largest employers with women dominating in fields of nursing, teaching and administration/clerical work. Women dominate the lower levels of the civil service where only a few are in decision-making levels. Even in the sub-sectors of health and education where women dominate as teachers and nurses, men dominate at decision-making levels in both the civil service, and their respective unions<sup>29</sup>.



In the Central/Eastern division, mainly in urban Suva areas, commercial sex work is a common source of income for women and transgender women. Although considered illegal, it is regularly carried out in the 'dark' and the transaction happens 'secretly'. The sex workers have identified lack of employment opportunities, and the need to maintain a living as the reasons for the existence of their work.

The focus of this case study is to determine if the conflict in Fiji has affected women's economic status particularly assessing the larger and inevitable adverse economic impacts such as devaluation of the Fiji dollar by 20%, and a general poor performance of the economy. A general discussion on Fiji's economy and detailed reports consulted in preparing this short case study, indicate that political crisis in Fiji since 1987 have been contributing negatively for women to progress economically. However, in carrying out this short case study, the findings discussed below relates to the changes in women's economic status caused by the coup of 2006.

The significant findings from the field interviews<sup>30</sup> conducted are as follows:

1. The greatest economic impact on women has been on their purchasing power and directly related to their standard of living. With a low or no increment in wages, but increasing costs of living in Fiji, particularly food items and transport costs, women have identified that they were able to satisfy the basic needs of the family members previously but currently are finding it difficult to do so. For example, 81% of women interviewed indicated that their standard of living was better 5 years ago while the 19% had additional income in the family hence felt that their living standards in relation to meeting the daily expenses had improved. Additionally, in order to cope with the increase in food/fuel prices, 75% of these women had to cut costs on groceries, while 31% tried cutting costs of utility bills, and 38% reduced visits paid to family members/relatives, and 75% opted to travel by bus instead of taxis. This also meant waking up early to catch buses to make it to the office on time. Other methods adopted include not buying the 'luxury' items in groceries such as butter, milk, peanut butter etc, and all of the women interviewed had indicated that they are eating meat less frequently.
2. The greater impact on women has been due to their perceived gendered role in society as care givers, nurturers, and home makers, all of which in turn affects their decision making in trying to fulfil these roles. 88% of the women interviewed live in a nuclear family set up, while 6% are single mothers, and 13% live in extended families.

<sup>29</sup> Government of Fiji, 2008; Leckie, 1987, 2000, 2002

<sup>30</sup> This also includes the field interviews conducted by FWRM for the Draft Research Report on Women's Economic Status in Fiji, 2011

For example, the increase in food prices or rise in costs of travelling, have affected women as they have to decide on what items will not be bought for the household, or how will they handle the changes in modes of transport. 100% of the women interviewed had to change their spending habits in the last 5 years, and all of them either minimized or totally stopped buying new clothes for themselves as they saw it to be an unnecessary expense.

3. Due to high levels of unemployment, women find it difficult to negotiate for better work conditions; thus fearing job loss women continue to work with difficult situations such as take on additional workload, and take work home, work overtime, and carry additional responsibilities at work, and opt to ignore difficult colleagues and supervisors who may be discriminatory towards them. Apart from 25% of women, none of the women have any other source of income. In addition to this, women also have the responsibility of supporting other family members. For example, only 38% of the women interviewed in the civil service have received a promotion, and 19% of which have served in the respective Ministry for more than 20 years. Further to this, 63% of these women have received a slight increase in their salary in the last 5 years and out of this, 19% of the women have been in the service for more than 20 years. Despite this, 75% of the women support their families and relatives other than their immediate family. In order to do so, 56% seek assistance from relatives working overseas and 56% have identified that they depend on remittances, particularly from their female relatives who work as care givers in the USA. However, remittances are allocated for certain expenses including education, and family events such as weddings or funerals.
4. As a result of financial stress, women take on the multiple burdens in trying to maintain the balance and upkeep of their family's security. This also includes women taking multiple roles in the family as well, either due to male unemployment or their partners not providing any support to sustain the family. For example, 100% of the women interviewed in the civil service, have indicated that they undertake the responsibility of their children's education, including preparation of meals, and assisting in their homework. Women have also indicated that in order to reduce costs they would prepare meals at home for their children and have to wake up early to do so. It was pointed out that before they could afford to pay for the meals from the school canteen.
5. In order to deal with financial difficulties, women tend to strategize, particularly finding alternative ways such as using up their savings, taking out loans, withdrawing money from their superannuation schemes, using union membership benefits, and using family support to handle extra work related to their home. 94% have superannuation funds (FNPf funds) and 6% do not have any funds although is a member of the scheme. However, 69% have withdrawn their funds to finance or re-finance their house, education and children's education, husband's health. For example, 75% of women interviewed have taken loans from banks and family members during family functions, education, or finance for home maintenance or build a new house. Further to this, 63% of these women have indicated that as a result of taking the loans, they had to cut back on household expenses including utilities, groceries and buying clothes. For 6% of the women, their name was also listed in the Credit Bureau for 'bad credit' after her separation from her husband.
6. Women put aside their leisure activities such as baking, taking part in sports, or shopping for clothes, if it meant adding to their savings, or minimising costs so that money is utilised into the welfare of their family. Women also have minimised travelling particularly to relatives to reduce costs, because visiting families is also associated with providing some form of financial support: for example, buying groceries or clothes for the relatives while visiting. The reduction is mainly related to high costs of travelling by taxis, as this is a common mode of transport for families. 25% of the women interviewed highlighted

that they now stay at homes during the weekend, and utilise the time to clean up their houses and work in their gardens, and 44% indicated that they spend time with their children or watch DVD's at home. Nineteen percent of the women who indicated that they used to bake and 13% of the women who indicated that they used to be part of some sports clubs, are now unable to do so due to extra costs involved in doing this.

## Strategies used to adjust to the high cost of living and pay cuts

A wage freeze was put in place in 2001 under the interim Government to combat the economic downturn following the 2000 coup; this is ongoing to 2011 under the Bainimarama regime.<sup>31</sup> The Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) is used to adjust salaries to inflation and has been in areas since 2003, in 2007 the military regime backed out of the negotiated repayment agreed by Laisenia Qarase's Government. Private sector influences we also involved in convincing government that COLA was not affordable (Lutua, 2011). A "wage freeze" in combination with the stop on COLA this means no change in salaries in the public service at all; therefore an increase in salary is only possible through promotion.

*For nurses we have a starting rate, it's just increased early this year but still due to the cost of living I think the pay is not enough compared to the work that we do (the pay is not fair). I start off with \$FJD13,854<sup>32</sup> and for the last 8 years that I've been working as a nurse my salary just moved up to \$FJD14,284 as of last year. I started in 2004 and until early 2011 I got an increment. If I to be get a promotion then my pay will increase. But for midwifery when you come back to work your salary is still the same because there is no promotion. The salary is all the same whether you are a staff nurse or a midwife, whether you specialized in medical or surgical, the salary is still the same but only if you have a post then the salary will increase. As for me I did a Diploma in Nursing at the Fiji School of Nursing for three years and even if I complete this Postgraduate Diploma I still stay as a staff nurse and my pay is still the same. I will be a staff midwife but the salary is still the same. (Nurse)*

I had stopped taking hormonal tablets (for 1 year), decrease in shopping, stopped going to hospital, trying to be mindful of my health so I can avoid the cost of going to hospital. Now I save money to buy hormonal tablets to finish the transit (Sex Worker)

The civil service has also faced wage cuts, in 1987 facing a significantly contracting economy in the wake of the May 14 1987 coup, a 15% cut was introduced across the board, in 2000 civil servants experienced a 12.5% pay cut, and in 2007 a 5% wage cut of civil service workers. Coupled with currency devaluations of 20% in 1987, 20% in 1995 and 20% in 2009, this means salaries have been cut by 32.5 per cent, while the currency has been devalued by 60 per cent over 24 years. The 'real value' or purchasing power of civil servant wages in decreases due to currency devaluations and inflation, while the cost of goods and services continue to increase.

As these nurses noted:

*I have been working in the Ministry for 21 years and I have not been given any promotion and only a slight increase in my salary. (Nurse)*

*We don't buy meat regularly but eat meat only once week and don't buy milk anymore as we can't afford it. (Nurse)*

<sup>31</sup> In 1984, the Alliance government imposed a wage freeze on the civil service to combat the excessive spending of the Alliance regime, these became a cornerstone of the Labour Party national election campaign, and thus precipitated the 1987 coups (Fraenkel, 2007; Robertson & Tamanisau, 1988).

<sup>32</sup> \$1FJD = \$0.57USD <http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert/?Amount=1&From=FJD&To=USD> (Dated 30/10/11)



The Ministry of Health has significant staffing concerns, they note the “continued resignations of health professionals to either join the private sector or migrate to greener pastures” (Ministry of Health, 2006:7). Others representing civil service interests also comment that the downgrading in conditions in the civil service means skilled workers get agitated, and leave for the private sector and overseas. (Lutua, 2011)

*More nurses are migrating and we are lucky to have Sangam school of Nursing for educating some more nurses. In the work place in Labasa even in the wards we need more nurses because if it's a full ward we need more manpower. This is why complaints come in with regards to the services it gives. At least in a shift they should have 3 nurses per ward because currently there are 2 nurses to cater for 24 beds that is too much and is still the same 8 years ago. A lot of nurses get retired at the age of 55 years and it affects the staffing. They should at least get these nurses to work under contract after 55 years. The problem is that we miss their skills and experiences and they take with them the good nursing skills. I feel more confident working with them because if I'm not doing the right thing I am happy to be corrected by someone who is 20 years old in the service. With this, both the nurses and the patient like it. (Nurse)*

The impacts of high workload is gendered, women have a particular experience of heavy workload because of their role in the household as mothers and wives:



*My children wished I could give them more time. I come home and am tired. (Teacher)*

*We work for 8 hours and we stand on call because if there are emergency cases after hours we are called in. For us single is nothing to us but it's a burden to those that have families because after work they have to go home and cook and clean and if there is an emergency they come in when they are supposed to spend time with their children. (Nurse)*

*I baby sit my nieces when I am not working. (Sex Worker)*

Further to this, women also have the gendered role of nurturing, thus have to make tough decisions to budget out food expenses and what items to be removed from the grocery list. As a strategy to cope with the high cost of food prices items termed ‘luxurious’ including peanut butter, meat, milk, biscuits are struck off the list. Another strategy which also increases the burden on women is to wake up early to prepare for children’s meals for schools. In addition to this, women have also opted to travel by bus rather than taxi as the fare is cheaper.



*Before I would give money to my children to buy meals at school, but I can't afford that anymore (Nurse)*

*I always feel guilty that I can't provide enough for my children, and try to make them understand, and I think they do but I can't help feel this way (Teacher)*

*We can't afford alcohol so sometimes when we really need it we tend to sniff glue, and it is dangerous and makes us vulnerable and we get less money, and one woman died in our flat because of this. (Sex Worker)*

## Dependency on remittances and loans

Women are now more dependent on external sources of funds such as loans and remittances to finance any additional expenses that they need to incur. These include building or re-building houses, education either personal or children's, and to participate and support family events such as funerals and weddings. Women also depend largely on withdrawing funds from their superannuation scheme (Fiji National Provident Funds – FNPF) for these financial needs as well.

*Yes been using FNPF to pay for 2 daughters university education. Also in 2006 withdrew some of FNPF funds to pay of loan that was taken out for purchase of their home. (Senior Secretary)*

The impact has also been directed to the use of savings to substantiate the income and to meet the high costs of living. For women, savings is only possible to subsidise immediate expenses including education and assisting in family obligatory contributions, which for some have increased.

*I try to save some money when I can especially for my nephews education. Because his father is not a good man, we have put him in Boarding School, so he is away from all this, but it is expensive for me because I look after him. (Sex Worker)*

*I have more family members in the village requesting for help, so I ask them to give me root crops or fish in return because things are so expensive here in the urban areas (Sex Worker)*

*I have stopped attending the usual family meetings and only attend if it is my immediate families or very important, because when I attend it also mean that I should give money as contributions, so I rather not go because I need that extra money (Civil Servant)*

It can be said therefore, that the economic down turn and other changes have partly been impacted by the military takeover of government; and have had an impact on women's economic status.

The consequences of economic stress are fractious on peace and well-being. It is a determinant of violence in the household. Women's strong commitment to their responsibilities sees them take on extra work to ensure household needs are met. In the workplace most women cannot address grievances through formal processes, and so respond by making adjustments in spaces where it does not cause confrontation or

ramifications at work. The consequences of the 2006 coup has contributed to the strengthening of autocratic behaviour, and decision-making, in structures of governance and the management of the economy and resulted in increased burdens for women.

In trying to link between economic empowerment and the usage of various international instruments the Shadow NGO Report on Fiji's second, third and fourth Combined Periodic Report to the CEDAW Committee (46<sup>th</sup> Session) identifies that Fiji is weak in its implementation of its principles. Despite having the political commitment by the current government, there are insufficient resources either available or allocated to implement the standards in CEDAW. Fiji has only demonstrated marked advancement in the implementation of CEDAW where strategic partnerships between government and women's NGOs have together effectively harnessed the most efficient technical capacities and resources for maximum impact. The Family Law Act 2003 (FLA) is one such example.

In the Concluding Comments of 2010 on Fiji, the CEDAW Committee strongly urged that the State party to take immediate, clear and credible steps to adopt a new constitution through a collaborative process involving the full participation of women, and to fully restore the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary through, inter alia, the re-establishment of the Judicial Service Commission. The Committee also urges the State party to hold free and fair elections as early as possible. In keeping with its previous recommendation, the Committee encouraged the State party to ensure that the constitutional review process addresses the need to incorporate the principle of equality of women and men, in line with article 2, as well as the definition of discrimination against women and to include a clear procedure for the enforcement of fundamental rights in line with article 1 of the Convention.

The CEDAW Committee in its Concluding Comments to Fiji in 2010 called upon the State party to give urgent priority attention to the national machinery for the advancement of women and to provide it with adequate authority, decision-making power, and human and financial resources to work effectively for the promotion of gender equality and women's rights. The Committee encourages the State party to ensure that the registration requirements of the Fiji Women's Federation for non-governmental organizations, and the further requirement of the State party that permits be issued for all meetings, do not infringe upon the right to freedom of association and assembly or restrict the opportunity for non-governmental organizations to engage in consultative processes towards gender equality and the promotion and protection of women's rights. The Committee recommends that the national machinery enhance its cooperation with women's non-governmental organizations for the effective implementation of programmes for the advancement of women.

Since 10 April 2009, the political, legal, and human rights situation of the people of Fiji has deteriorated further. Following Fiji's Court of Appeal decision in April, ruling that the actions of Fiji's military in December 2006 were unlawful and unconstitutional, the illegal Fiji interim military regime has purportedly abrogated the 1997 Constitution and imposed the full trappings of a military dictatorship through a series of "decrees" replacing the law, and the draconian Public Emergency Regulations (PER). With both illegal instruments, the military declared a State of Emergency; gave the military the right to use lethal force with impunity, banned political/NGO meetings, instituted a permit system for meetings and conferences; sacked Fiji's judiciary reappointing those perceived to be sympathetic to it; imposed severe restrictions on local and international media by putting military censors in all newsrooms, expelled foreign journalists; curtailed freedom of expression and opinion; and arbitrarily detained people<sup>33</sup>.

The CEDAW Committee also urged the State party in its Concluding Comments to Fiji in 2010, to ensure the protection of human rights, including the rights of human rights

<sup>33</sup> FWRM: The Shadow NGO Report to UN CEDAW Committee, 2009

defenders. The Committee also strongly urges the State party to take steps to ensure that the Public Emergency Regulation and the Media Decree do not infringe upon the rights of women, including women human rights defenders, and their right to freedom of expression.

Apart from the Family Law Act (2003) there has been no legislation enacted as a means of incorporating the CEDAW Convention into domestic law, and to make discriminatory acts in the public and private actors actionable. There is no such legislation as an Equal Opportunities Act, Gender Equality Act or Anti-Sex Discrimination Act. The majority of steps that have been taken to ensure that women are informed about their rights are done by NGOs and other organisations. There has been some good collaboration between the national machinery of women and women's NGOs prior to December 2006 when the military regime took over government. The Government process for measuring the practical realisation of the principles of equality and non-discrimination and for monitoring discriminatory practices is not known<sup>34</sup>.

The MDG Report compiled by the State in 2010 identifies that Fiji is on track to achieve five out of eight goals whilst in 2004 Fiji was on track in achieving six out of these goals. Moreover, the Report points out that a number of factors have contributed to Fiji's failure towards making a meaningful progress. The factors identified includes: continuous political instability, poor governance structures, hike in global oil prices leading to high inflation thus reducing income of people pushing more people into poverty, and unproductive use of fertile land due to non-renewal of expiring land leases. Global factors including the financial crisis is also one of the major factors identified affecting remittances and the tourism industry in Fiji<sup>35</sup>.

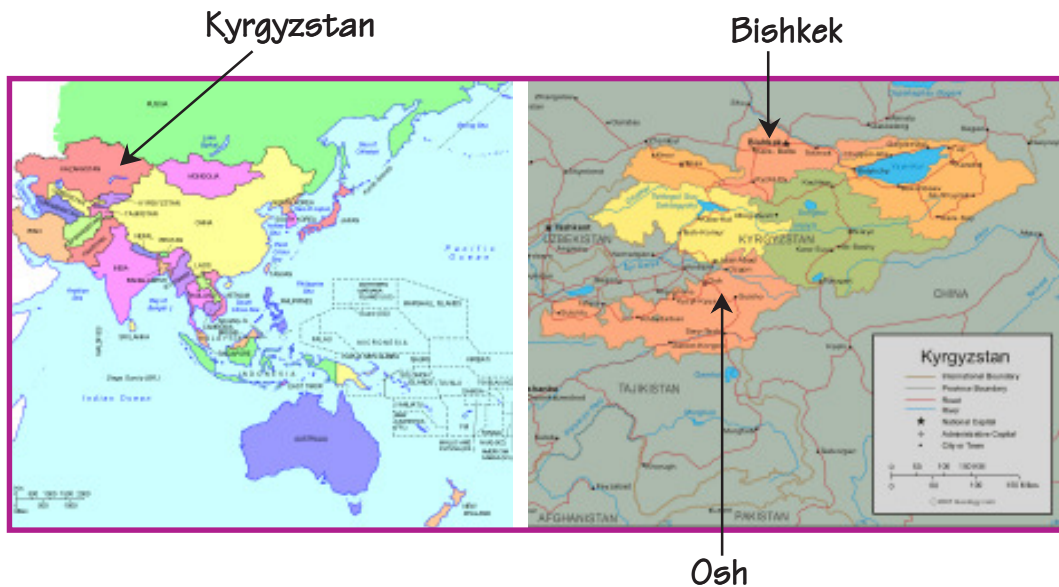


<sup>34</sup> FWRM: *The Shadow NGO Report to UN CEDAW Committee*, 2009.

<sup>35</sup> Ministry of National Planning, 2010, *Millennium Development Goals, 2<sup>nd</sup> Report 1990-2009, Report of the Fiji Islands*

# Kyrgyzstan

Country : Kyrgyzstan  
Area of case study : Osh & Bishkek



Kyrgyzstan is located in Central Asia and has borders with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, China. This small mountainous country was part of the Soviet Union until 1991 when it became a separate independent republic.

Its population is between five and six million people. Ethnic diversity is one of the features of the country: Kyrgyz, Russian, Kazakh, Uzbek, Ukrainian, German, Tajik and many other nationalities representatives have lived together in peace for many decades. In Kyrgyzstan there is not only ethnic, but religious diversity. The majority are Muslims while there are also Orthodox Christians.

Kyrgyzstan has ratified majority of human rights protecting documents, including CEDAW, OP CEDAW, it has signed and adopted BPFA, MDG. In 2006 Kyrgyzstan National Plan of Actions (NPA) on gender equality made the first reference to the UN SCR 1325. The Constitution of the country guarantees gender equality. Kyrgyzstan has a special law on state guarantees of gender equality.

Kyrgyzstan has faced several political and ethnic conflicts during the last two decades. Political conflicts led to two revolutions (2005, 2010) that impacted very negatively on the country's economy. Severe interethnic conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbek erupted in June 2010, practically immediately after the bloody power change of the previous President of Kyrgyzstan, Bakiev's regime in April 2010. This conflict directly and heavily affected two southern provinces – Osh and Djalal Abad.

This case study focuses on the economic impact of the June 2010 ethnic conflict in the South of Kyrgyzstan, focus groups were held in Osh and Bishkek.

## Methodology for Research

- 2 focus groups (total 31 women)
- 10 x key person interviews

Two focus group discussions were held in Osh and Bishkek during September and October, 2011. Sixteen women attended the Osh focus group and 15 women attended the Bishkek focus group.

The groups included different categories of affected women including business women (small and medium enterprises), rural household heads, women who lost main bread winners, women who lost their houses, women who suffered gender based violence during the conflict.

In addition, 10 key person interviews were undertaken with State officials, International Development Actors and UN Agencies to determine economic aid strategies employed in these regions.

## Key Findings

The Inter-ethnic conflict of June 2010 impacted the lives of many people despite its short duration and it impacted on the economic development of the country. Hundreds of people were killed and injured, houses and businesses were set on fire, and people fled from the fighting. Direct losses to private business was high. The Ministry of Economic Regulations of Kyrgyzstan, estimated that 1,786 registered businesses were affected with a lost 1.9 billion soms (national currency of Kyrgyzstan). There is no doubt that this conflict negatively affected businesses and people's employment. The subsequent psychological and physical impacts of conflict, led to loss of jobs, loss of businesses, loss of income. One reported consequence of this was that violence against women increased and was wide spread across the area.

This case study focused on women in business, small business or employment (either in the casual or paid workforce). From this case study, it can be summarized that the conflict had a direct and severe negative impact on women's livelihoods and economic empowerment. While exact statistics do not exist, all participants in the study identified themselves as having been economically affected by the conflict. This was due to loss of business, lost income from businesses which has not been restored, loss of earnings, and/or the loss of the major breadwinner in the house (husbands and/or sons).

This research identified that among the most vulnerable group of women are:

- low income tiny business owners in open markets;
- legally illiterate business women
- women owned middle business
- sex workers,
- women, who lost their husbands and sons,
- women without official registration of their marriages.

Patriarchal stereotypes compound the situation of women. Traditional marriages which are still carried out, are mostly not registered and consequently, are not recognized as legal marriages. Women who run businesses in their own names, though married according to traditional customs are thus not considered eligible to government compensation programs. Such women are shut out from accessing state assistance for their economic activities (small businesses)

None of the vulnerable groups of women were represented in the any decision making of post conflict rehabilitation.





For some women the conflict has provided an opportunity to branch out into new ventures. International NGO's and UN Agencies have supported small scale business development through training and small scale funds, however, once the business reached a certain level, then in order to grow, these businesses are subject to the high rate loans from the commercial banks. This was seen as a key barrier to economic growth and empowerment.

For those injured or made disabled during the conflict, there has been little or no recompense or support to rebuild past earning capacity or retraining. Violence against women is reported to have drastically risen, both in private and public spaces.

Conflict with its direct impact on physical ability of women (as a result of various acts of violence such as shooting, physical abuse, rape, torture, displacement, etc.) has undeniably limited the income generation activities, employment or business development opportunities for women.

During this period and in the immediate aftermath, the only organizations that were giving some economic or financial assistance to economically affected women were women's organizations. Discussion on the economic and financial needs of women with Avazkan Ormonova, Director of the women's NGO "DIA" in Osh city showed that some work was done and training for vulnerable groups was conducted by the organisation at the provincial level.

Towards the beginning of 2011 some local NGO's have developed training and workshop spaces for women from both sides of the conflict to come together to learn and share skills, knowledge and practical business strategies. These spaces have proven essential to rebuilding trust in a divided community where conflict was defined by ethnic divide.

State response to rebuilding business following the conflict was slow and came in the form of various assistance packages to those who lost businesses; however, the initial payouts did not match the losses to rebuild and high interest rates on loans provided by the State have been crippling and have resulted in lack of progress on rebuilding business. Where the business was registered in the husband's name (as women cannot register businesses) assistance was provided to the male head of household and not directly into the hands of the business owner. Home based businesses such as hairdressing and sewing remain unrecognized. For some women, this lack of financial and strategic assistance has resulted in them finding other paid employment. One successful café owner has not been able to rebuild the business following the conflict and is now teaching and earning a much lower income for her family.

*"The challenge to women during and after the conflicts on the experience of Kyrgyzstan shows that there are several layers in the problem and its solution. They are political domestic recognition, economic decision-making on rehabilitation, financial resources, availability and patriarchy with its social stereotypes narrowing vision of all stakeholders in the rehabilitation process. All these layers are interrelated."*

In relating this to the application of human rights mechanisms and treaties, politically the Kyrgyzstan State has declared its commitments by signing various significant international documents to protect diverse women's human rights, including economic rights from

violation and discrimination during and after the conflicts. But there is no more concrete political recognition of the challenge by other political and legislative means. These international obligations are not mainstreamed into major strategic country documents or strategies. For example, the various State run development programs for economic empowerment executed at different levels, (country development strategy, entrepreneurship support program, rehabilitation program after the conflict, etc.) are not formulated as a strategy for strengthening women's income generating sources; access to financial resources, including women's participation in decision making bodies although these are key concerns in the BPFA, and essential to building peace and security in the country.

Importantly, in domestic documents conflicts are not politically recognized as an economically disempowering process for women. The economic damage from conflicts to women's economic status, income losses, was not addressed by any economic rehabilitation program.

There is a reported lack of understanding of a human rights framework, the application of a women's right's protecting frameworks and the need to collect gender disaggregated data on issues such as economic losses because of the conflict, and a lack of sex differentiated data on lists on ownership of businesses and enterprises which consequently does not give the gender dimension of the sector.

*'Official decision makers don't apply women's rights protecting framework, for example quite intensively discussed UNSCR 1325 was not referred by any state official with who interviews for this research were conducted. Local authorities don't have enough power to provide specialized support. International frameworks and documents like CEDAW, BPFA, UNSCR 1325 are not used.'*

*'Practically all interviewed officers from State and donors or international organisations in the South could not respond to the question "what and how women's rights protecting international tools were used?" and sent to the head offices in Bishkek. This means that CEDAW, BFPA, UNSCR 1324, NPA on gender equality are not used at all in their practice'*

These comments both demonstrate the gap between political declaration, and practical implementation, and indicate that horizontal implementation of women's rights obligations have not been enacted. Therefore, the vertical implementation of the human rights instruments is not filtering into actions at the national, state or local level.



# Nepal

Country : Nepal  
Area of case study : Makawanpur,  
Inner Terai region of Central Nepal



Nepal is located between India and China with long stretches of borders between these countries. It has a population of 29 million; its main religions are Hinduism, Buddhism, Christian, and Islam. Its capital city is Kathmandu.

Nepal witnessed the Maoist insurgency ('People's War') launched by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [CPN (M)], from February 1996 to April 2006. In April 2006, tens of thousands of people flooded the streets of Kathmandu and other urban centers throughout the country in a 19 day movement (*Jana Aandolan II*) against the monarchy. The king was forced to concede to the demands of the movement and reinstate the House of Representatives (Dissolved in May 2002). The Seven Party Alliance coalition government was formed thereafter began negotiating with the CPN (M), which led to a series of agreements, culminating in the Comprehensive Peace Accord signed on November 21, 2006. The government and the CPN (M) signed another agreement for Monitoring of Arms and Armies on November 28, 2006.

The decade-long armed conflict caused erosion of many social values, trust and solidarity in families, communities and society in general. More than 17,000 people lost their lives in the armed conflict and many others have been affected. The conflict also had a toll on development activities, law and order, basic infrastructure and services. This caused the economy to shrink. Human rights violations and brutality escalated on both sides of the conflict victimizing all segments of the population, particularly the most vulnerable are the children and women. The poor and/or socially excluded members of society suffered exponentially in the conflict because they were less able to cope with, respond to, or recover from the complex conflict-related situations.

Many women, who used to be confined within house and household chores only, walked over their threshold to join the war. The lives of women were greatly affected; many became heads of household with missing, dead, migrated, displaced/IDP husbands; they lost their adult children who could have helped them make a living, and who could have provided social security in their old age. Furthermore, they had to deal with home searches by both warring sides, and along with it, faced physical and emotional violence, such as sexual

harassment, rape, barrage of verbal abuse. They had to take care of children and elders in the family along with economic issues. The list of what women had to face was endless with both physical and psychological tortures.

The post conflict environment has opened up significant opportunities for women, particularly in the public arena. Political empowerment of women gained greater momentum after the decade long conflict. Large numbers of marginalized and socially suppressed groups have become aware of political and social issues. After the end of conflict, women's involvement in decision making in household and social economic activities has increased. Women constituted 33 percent of Constituent Assembly. Many positive changes have been made in policies that are women friendly. Just to mention one relating to economic empowerment: National Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment 2004<sup>36</sup> has developed strategic planning for economic empowerment of women. It aims to empower women by ensuring access and control on economic resources; to increase women's opportunity on income generating activities and employment; and to develop strong business network for women's economic capacity building.

Makwanpur was selected for the study based on the impact of the armed conflict, and accessibility of conflict survivors, their involvement in economic activities, and their status in post-conflict period. Makwanpur is situated in the inner Terai region of central Nepal. Number of major clashes took place in this district during the armed conflict. The incidents in Phaparbari and Padampokhari VDCs took lives of many people and left hundreds injured and disabled.

## Methodology of the Research

- Desk Research
- 6 Key In-Depth Interviews (IDIs with women survivors of conflict)
- Focus group discussion (total 10 key district stakeholders)
- Case documentation from HimRights 'Reconciliation Workshops and Public Hearing' of the women survivors

Six in-depth interviews were conducted with women conflict survivors who are now involved in different kinds of economic activities. Approximately five years after Comprehensive Peace Accord (November, 2006), conflict survivors returned to their place of origin. In Makwanpur, most of the conflict survivors have recently returned to their villages. For the interviewer, reaching some of these villages was extremely difficult as many of those willing to participate in this study live in remote villages, some are two days walk from the nearest vehicle accessible point. Hence, access was not possible, and they were not able to come to district headquarter during the research period. Although there are many women conflict survivors in this district and most of them are living in desperate conditions. The researcher could only reach out to few of them. Six IDIs focused on those who are involved in income generating activities only. Furthermore, a focus group discussion was undertaken with various stakeholders to learn if they had integrated or mainstreamed the women survivors in their business, work, and government offices.

In addition to IDIs, a focus group discussion was conducted with 10 district stakeholders in Makwanpur. The objective of this focus group was to understand different efforts of both government and private sector in integrating women survivors into economic activities. The stakeholders were Chairperson of District Chamber of Commerce and Industries, journalists, member of Local Peace Committee, professor, representative of District Women and Children Development Office, and Coordinator of Democratic Confederation of Nepalese Trade Unions. The stakeholders were selected to learn if they had been able to integrate women survivors as well as to raise awareness on their role in integrating and mainstreaming women conflict survivors in their sectors like small home/agriculture based

<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Department of Women and Children, Nepal [http://www.dwd.gov.np/uploaded/pdf/BPFa-compiled\\_volume.pdf](http://www.dwd.gov.np/uploaded/pdf/BPFa-compiled_volume.pdf)

business, large scale business, government and civil society institutions. Furthermore, they are in decision making position to bring policy change as well as in practice for positive social and economic changes in the lives of women conflict survivors.

HimRights conducted 'Reconciliation Workshop and Public Hearing' in Makwanpur with more than 55 women conflict survivors from different VDCs in March 2009 and June 2010. During the program, individual cases were documented. Some of the cases are referred from these documentation.

## Key Findings

The armed conflict has both negative and positive impact on social and economic lives of women. Women from all walks of life were affected. Most of Nepali households have gender segregated roles; usually, men are the heads of household. They engage in economic and public domain activities. During the armed conflict, men were the main target of both conflicting parties. They either joined the Maoist Movement, or State forces, were killed or displaced to cities or to other countries. The absence of men as heads of households means there was an increased role of women in decision making at home and public space, earlier they were mostly confined to the domestic sphere only. The situation led to sudden changes in family dynamics. The families which used to be headed by male members are now headed by women; all household and economic responsibilities shifted solely on women. This forced them to look for alternative economic options for sustaining their livelihoods which is empowering but difficult. Many were displaced to district headquarters. Finding jobs is difficult, many started their own small income generating activities.

### **Tika Devi Humagain, 46 years, Makwanpur**

Her husband was kidnapped by Maoists during the armed conflict and his status is still unknown. He was accused of being a spy. After that incident, her family was displaced to Hetauda from Rautahat with her two daughters and a son. Her elder daughter is physically disabled and HimRights has been providing her with education support. There are no improvements in her family status after the displacement. She started selling popcorn and roasted beans on a push cart. She says, *"It was very difficult for me to send my children to school, more difficult was to run household activities."* However, she is managing her family with whatever she could earn from her small street business. She expects to expand her business if she could borrow some money at reasonable interest rates. She is not engaged to any of the local saving and credit groups, however, she has made some saving in a bank. She is happy with whatever she has been doing and she feels proud to explain others about her business. She participates in many of the programs organized for conflict survivors. She is much confident after participating in such programs. Earlier, she used to think that girls do not need school education. But now, she is trying to send her elder daughter to school.

Her business is going on well. She feels that everyone has right to live with dignity. She says, *"We should engage in income generating activities instead of being economically dependent on others."*

Participation of women in income generating activities was very low due to deep rooted gender role segregation in the society. However, in post-conflict circumstances, large numbers of women were forced to be part of income generating activities in this district. They started to become involved in local saving groups, cooperatives, and mother's groups. After being part of those groups, they are exposed to diverse economic opportunities. They could save and borrow money from those saving groups and cooperatives for small



income generating activities like buying chicken, cow, buffalo or vegetable farming. However, these schemes do not provide loans for expansion or for larger businesses which require substantial capital investment.

There are very few women conflict survivors who are actively involved in larger entrepreneurship or administrative/white colour jobs. Most of them have continued to work in small plots of land they own, in addition to daily wage labour. Few of them have been able to set up a business; most of them are running very small businesses. They are involved in businesses with a nominal amount of funds like candle making, spice, knitting sweaters, and food/vegetable push carts are the most common examples of women's involvement in income generating activities.

Women are often economically dependent on their husbands or male members of the family because of the patriarchal structure of the society. In the aftermath of the conflict, many women, especially widows and 'half widows' became the sole breadwinners of the family. Economic sustenance remains a major challenge.

**Maiya BK** is from Churiyamai VDC. She had to go through major hardships after her husband was killed during the armed conflict. In 2008, she started a small tea stall for economic sustenance. She got financial assistance of Rs. 20,000 from an organization to establish the tea stall. That assistance proved to be the base of her family's stability. It has brought about changes in her personal and social life. Many people come to drink tea and have snacks although they know she is Dalit ("untouchable cast"). She says, "I think the awareness level is gradually increasing. People do not discriminate against me." Her business is doing well. She has also joined Janajagrit Saving Group as a member and regularly deposits her savings. She said, "Government should provide us financial assistance without interest. Likewise, private sector should identify victims like us and convey our issues to concerned bodies."

Women's involvement in saving groups and cooperative has brought about lots of positive changes in women's awareness. They are able to collect millions of rupees and mobilize for overall development of women. It has not only organized women but empowered them to take part in social activities like violence against women and human trafficking and community mediation. Furthermore, they are now economically independent which has increased their self-esteem and leadership skills as well.

**Krishna Subedi, Padampokhari VDC**

Her husband was a Maoist cadre. He was killed during the armed conflict in 2005. Then, she decided to start buffalo farming to sustain her livelihood. When she started her occupation, the community was not supportive to her. She shared, "In the beginning, I didn't get support from anyone. But, I didn't lose my confidence because I could see lots of better opportunities in this occupation; I didn't have worry for selling milk because the demand for pure milk is always high in the market." Now, Krishna sells other dairy items like ghee and curd as well. Her daughters have now completed their higher education and they hold jobs. It has improved her economic conditions. Furthermore, she shared few of the neighbours, who used to backbite against her after her husband's death, come to borrow money from her. She is currently associated with a small women's saving group. She is completely satisfied with her occupation.

She said, "The Nepal government should provide loans without interest to promote women's entrepreneurship including for women conflict survivors with major focus on their economic empowerment."



During the Focus Group Discussion, stakeholders said that before the conflict, the majority of women were not involved in income generating activities, but focussed on domestic and agricultural work. Very few were associated with family run businesses. The major problem is a lack of resources, and capital investment for women, which kept them away from economic activities/entrepreneurships. The stakeholders also emphasized

needed to encourage women entrepreneurs. They said that successful stories of women entrepreneurs should be published in the media in order to inspire, and encourage others to be involved in such activities. Journalist participants of FGD said that they were willing to promote success stories of these women in the media.

The stakeholders pointed out, to achieve women's economic empowerment, legal and social discriminations and restrictions on women's activities has to be eliminated too. Women usually do not have easy access to resources available at the district and village level. Hence, the government and non-government sector has to organize women empowerment programs to unite them, increase access to State resources and integrate them to income generating activities. Income generating activities are very crucial for women not only to revive local economies immediately after the conflict, but also to contribute to further entrepreneurship development and consolidation of sustainable peace in the country.

"Directives for economic assistance, relief and compensation for conflict victims, 2009/10" has made several provisions of providing relief packages to conflict survivors. Most of the women survivors have difficulty in accessing the information on it and all the processes/documents to register. There is no government system to proactively document or register conflict survivors unless they do it on their own. Only those who are registered and accepted by the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction could get the relief packages which are only distributed by the District Administration Office in district headquarters. Many of the survivors are illiterate, and in some areas women are not allowed to travel on their own. It is very difficult for women from remote villages to travel to district headquarters time and again. *Buddhi Maya Rai, from Raigaon VDC, one of remotest parts of Makwanpur, her son was killed by the State Force, had to go the District Administration Office 11 times before she finally was able to complete all the paper work to receive the relief package of Rs. 100,000. Most part of the money was spent in travelling, foods, and lodging along with a literate companion.*<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, women have to be accompanied by men to process for packages in order to get State relief packages, which again adds economic burden. They can further be victimized of character assassination as having a love affair with the male chaperon in their own community.

The "Directives for economic assistance, relief and compensation for conflict victims, 2009/10" also has provision of education scholarships to the children of conflict survivors. The scholarships are very important for women conflict survivors, as they are the sole caretaker of their children. Their well being also reflects and impacts on the future social security of the mother.

Though the government has prepared Directives for relief packages to women conflict survivors, it is alone time support. Many of the women survivors have received relief packages; most part of that amount is spent on paying back loans they borrowed for food,

<sup>37</sup> Reconciliation Workshop and Public Hearing with women conflict survivors, Makwanpur: HimRights case documentation, June, 2010

medical and other expenses, as well as during registration and processing period. There are some other issues for women who are not “money smart” as the relief money is taken away by other members of their family. Hence, it does not contribute much in their income generating activities.

There has been little support at the VDC level to enable women to take up any kinds of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, women do not have information, knowledge or access to any policies which could support them. However, there are few NGOs which are working on formation of saving and women’s groups in different VDCs. These saving and women’s groups are a starting point of income generating activities for many women.

Although, the government is primarily responsible for addressing issues of women conflict survivors, there are no specific programs from the government to increase participation of women, especially women conflict survivors, in their entrepreneurship development. However, there is an existing policy in which 10 percent of a local budget is allocated for women, 10 percent for indigenous and 10 percent for children at Village Development Committees (VDC) level and 15 percent of the total budget is available at District Development Committee for women. But due to lack of awareness, that fund is frozen in many cases and/or utilized for other purposes. The Local Development Officer from Makwanpur said, *“We have fund allocation for children and women at VDC level. We can allocate fund and specific group activities can be integrated in district annual policy only if it is demanded from VDC level. So far, I have not received any proposals demanding for it.”* However, in Kapilbastu district, Local Peace Committee supported women for capacity building and seed money for small businesses. Those who have set up businesses have done well on their own without the State support. Very recently, government has introduced ‘Immediate Relief Program, 2011’ which provisioned to provide relief packages for the families of killed or martyred, disappeared and wounded or disabled during the Maoist Peoples war.<sup>38</sup> Recently the government has provided additional relief of Rs. 200,000 to the families of killed and disappeared and Rs. 25,000 to widows of conflict victims. In Makwanpur, 142 families of killed have received additional relief package of Rs. 200,000 and 7 widows of conflict victims have received Rs. 25,000 and five are in process. At the same time, District Local Peace Committee is going to conduct ‘driving training’ to 10 conflict survivors as a part of an income generation program which is open for women and men.<sup>39</sup> During Reconciliation Workshop with Conflict affected women conducted by HimRights in Makwanpur, a few women have struggled to secure government jobs. *Sabita Chaulagain of Dhiyal VDC was a housewife. During the armed conflict, her husband was abducted and tortured by Maoists; both his legs were broken to many pieces. He is disabled and has difficulty in making a living. Due to this reason, she had to look for employment options. She is currently working in Hetauda Municipality as an Office Assistant and doing well.* After being part of Reconciliation Workshop, many women conflict survivors started business. It not only built self-confidence but also developed positive thinking and empathy for people from opposing sides of the conflict. They stopped thinking of taking revenge.<sup>40</sup>

**Hira Karmacharya from Hetauda**

*Her husband was killed by Maoist a decade ago who used to work as a communication officer for the local police. She had to go through all sorts of hardships after the incident. However, she did not let her confident down. She decided to start a small MoMo (kind of dumpling) shop in Hetauda to sustain her family with her three daughters. She invested Rs. 40,000 on it of the Rs. 750,000 which the Government provided as compensation for families of police. She has been successfully running for more than 8 years. At present, she is the proud owner the store and earns 1200 -1500 per day, which is sufficient for a family of four. She is fully satisfied with her business. She said, “Government should initiate capacity enhancement programs for women entrepreneurs.” She was a participant of Reconciliation Workshop and Public Hearing.*

<sup>38</sup> Immediate Relief Programme, 2011: Government of Nepal, Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers, September 9, 2011 <http://www.opmcm.gov.np>

<sup>39</sup> District Administration Office, Makwanpur, and District Local Peace Committee, Makwanpur (as of June, 2012)

<sup>40</sup> Reconciliation Workshop and Public Hearing with conflict survivors, HimRights, June, 2010

The stakeholders of the FGD did not view women economic empowerment as a priority or an important issue that needs to be addressed by them. Most of them did not see that they have any role in it; its between the State and survivors. Those, who owned businesses, had not taken much initiative towards integrating conflict affected women into it. Majority of people from the business sector do not like to have anything to do with survivors as they are perceived as Maoist or Maoist survivors. Furthermore, they do not want any retaliation or involvement from the State or Maoist. They did not understand the needs or rights of these women on economic rights and social justice. Even after a decade long, protracted armed conflict, they did not see the systemic structural violence or the root cause of it. They did not see the government and non-government actors as having a key role in establishing sustainable peace and ensuring economic rights of women conflict survivors.

They assumed whatever the government was providing as relief packages is sufficient. There is a need for joint dialogue between the private and public sector to formulate policies and programs in which they could map out how women conflict survivors could be part of their workforce and their capacity building. This lens is true for the donor community too as it is not a priority for them either any longer.

With regard to the implementation of International agreements, this is certainly not seen at the local level in this district of Nepal. Despite the government response to the CEDAW Committee questions on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Report (CEDAW/C/NPL/Q/4-5/Add.1) to a commitment to address gender disparity in Nepal this does not appear in practice. In addition, gender equality actions do not link with poverty alleviation strategies either politically or economically.

A Government report to the CEDAW committee mentions that the Women Development Programme (WDP) encourages social mobilization, economic empowerment and public awareness campaigns through group formation. Under this programme women are united against domestic violence and human trafficking. They are involved in skill development training, income generation, entrepreneurship development and business promotion by means of a revolving fund operation. Other important activities are livelihood education to adolescent girls, reproductive health and child protection. Women cooperatives have become an effective vehicle for uniting women engaged in the informal and unorganized sectors, conducting campaigns against various traditional malpractices, and promoting security for women members.<sup>41</sup>

The CEDAW Committee, on its concluding comments to Nepal on its fourth and fifth country report (July, 2011), appreciates the measures ensuring the presence of 33 per cent of women in the Constituent Assembly. The special gender-inclusive measures in the recruitment process in public service, the economic empowerment programmes for women and the measures increasing women's access to land. It also notes with appreciation that the State party acknowledges the need for additional temporary special measures for de facto equality.<sup>42</sup>

The CEDAW Committee also recommends the State party to strengthen initiatives aimed at encouraging sustainable economic empowerment of women, including the promotion of women's access to land and credit and\ the promotion of training in micro-enterprise development and management, and to monitor the impact of these initiatives especially for women conflict survivors.<sup>43</sup> But this is yet to be linked with women conflict survivors, which is very evident with the women from Makwanpur as most conflict survivors have initiated income generations on their own or with the help of NGOs.

The post conflict environment has opened up significant opportunities for women, particularly in the public arena. Political empowerment of women gained greater momentum after the decade long armed conflict. Women constituted 33 percent of the

<sup>41</sup> Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of States parties Nepal, November 2010 (Article 14)

<sup>42</sup> The CEDAW Committee Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Nepal (CEDAW/C/NPL/CO/4-5, 15)

<sup>43</sup> The CEDAW Committee Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Nepal (CEDAW/C/NPL/CO/4-5, 38 (b))

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/co/CEDAW-C-NPL-CO-4-5.pdf>



Constituent Assembly, applauded nationally and internationally. Many policies created during this time have been women friendly too. Nepal is one of the first countries in South Asia to formulate a National Action Plan on implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 & 1820 in February 2011; but its implementation part is yet to take place. However, the Government of Nepal is committed to the implementation of the UNSCR 1325, and 1820, as a mechanism for strengthening women's participation and involvement in the promotion of peace and security within the context of conflict prevention and resolution.<sup>44</sup> For the effective implementation of National Action Plan, in its Three Year Plan – Approach Paper [2011/12 – 2013/14], has devised action plans for enabling and strengthening the role of women in the establishment of sustainable peace and development through social, economic and political empowerment of women. It also identified strategic actions with the participation of the conflict-affected women and girls and in coordination with concerned stakeholders, formulate and implement gender sensitive health, education, physical, financial and economic recovery programmes based as per the need; implement special skill-oriented training and income generating training programmes for the benefit of conflict-affected women and girls based on their interests, ability and market potential; and provide seed money or interest-free loans to conflict-affected women and girls who have received training or apprenticeship for income generation.<sup>45</sup> De facto implementation could resolve and support most women survivors.

Formulation of other gender specific policies are important for integrating more women conflict survivors into income generating activities, that can lead to positive social and economic changes and sustainable peace in the country. There is need to mainstream marginalized women conflict survivors from remote areas in this whole process.

Furthermore, the government and private sectors should have specific programs and policies to promote economic empowerment of women conflict survivors. They should encourage women to take part in income generating activities; provide loans at low interest rates to them and or without collaterals. Marketing facilities for them should be promoted. Success stories of these women should be part of strategies to promote economic empowerment and sustainable peace. Moreover, women's saving groups and cooperatives should be protected and promoted by the State in order to incorporate many women into their system for further expansion and development. Affirmative action should be taken by government, non-government organizations and private sectors to integrate women conflict survivors into in to their system.



<sup>44</sup>National Action Plan on implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 (2011/12 – 2015/16), Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, February 1, 2011

<sup>45</sup>Three Year Plan – Approach Paper [2011/12 – 2013/14]: National Action Plan on implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, [2011/12 -2015/16], Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, February 1, 2011



# Pakistan

Country : Pakistan  
Area of case study : SWAT Valley (North Western Pakistan)



Pakistan shares borders with three countries: India to the east, Iran to the south west and Afghanistan, along the western and northern boundaries. It has a population of 177 million. Its capital city is Islamabad.

It is divided into four provinces: Balochistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (formerly North-West Frontier Province) Punjab and Sindh. A fifth province, Gilgit-Baltistan was added in August, 2009 through an executive order called Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-governance Order<sup>46</sup>; it is yet to be incorporated in the Constitution of Pakistan. In addition, there are special territories: the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA) which are governed by special laws and rules dating back to the British colonial times; and the Islamabad Capital Territory, Pakistan-administered Kashmir is known in Pakistan as Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). There are three key religions in Pakistan: Islam (97%), Hinduism, Christianity and others (3%). For administrative purposes the provinces are divided into districts which are at the top of a three-tier system of local government with the two lower tiers composed of tehsils and union councils.

Swat is a valley and an administrative district in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, located close to the Afghan-Pakistan border. It is the upper valley of the Swat River, which rises in the Hindu Kush Range. The capital of Swat is Saidu Sharif but the main town is Mingora. It borders Chitral, Upper Dir, Lower Dir, Malakand PA, Buner, Shangla and Kohistan districts of KP.<sup>47</sup>

Swat can be divided into two physical regions; Mountainous Ranges and Plains. The Plains valley of Swat starts from the foothill of Malakand. The mountainous ranges form a barrier between Gilgit and Swat; Chitral (KP) and Swat, and Swat and Buner. Formerly it was a Princely State, founded in 1915 after doing away with the rule of the Nawab of Dir (Another former princely state and not a district bordering Swat). Swat was merged with Pakistan in 1969<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> <http://dawn.com/2012/03/09/gilgit-baltistan-empowering-assembly/>

<sup>47</sup> <http://unportal.un.org.pk/sites/UNPakistan/HC/WASH%20Maps/Swat.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.valleyswat.net/history/state.html>

After the fall of the Taliban government in Kabul in 2001, many Taliban fled over the porous Afghan border with Pakistan and found refuge in the mountainous territory of North and South Waziristan (FATA). These Taliban, whose operations were initially focused in North and South Waziristan, has managed to spread its area of influence<sup>49</sup>. Tensions between the Government of Pakistan and these armed groups began in 2004 in the wake of the Pakistan Government's decision to 'Contribute to the International War on Terror' following the US military action in Afghanistan.

The insurgency in North-West Pakistan, between the government; armed religious groups and regional armed movements in which Pakistan non-military veterans of the Afghanistan war joined in, led to these (Pakistan based) Taliban taking hold of three agencies in FATA i.e. South/North Waziristan and Bajaur Agency.

The end of October, 2007 saw fighting erupt in Swat between the local politico-religious organization closely linked to the Taliban, Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Mohammadi (TSNM), that had been agitating for the imposition of Sharia law for almost a decade and the Pakistan army. By December the Army claimed defeating TSNM. However, the latter continued to challenge the KP government which entered into negotiations with TSNM and conceded to the demand of imposing Sharia law and suspending military operations. This was seen as a means to pacify a fierce Islamist insurgency and avoid civilian casualties in Swat – whose ski resort and mountain scenery once made it a popular tourist destination.

Despite this Taliban militants kept security forces engaged in sporadic battles throughout 2008-9. In April, 2009, the army was authorized to start Operation Black Thunderstorm and within a month had taken back the city of Mingora, from the Taliban. Sporadic fighting throughout Swat continued up until mid-June 2009. However, in the adjacent<sup>50</sup> district of Bruner, where the fleeing Taliban had taken refuge, their criminal activities continued.

The Operation in Swat (not termed war or conflict officially) was in response to Taliban insurgency whereby the attempt by the latter was to establish a base and stronghold after their displacement due to the US and ISAF operation in Afghanistan. The 'Talibanisation' of the communities in the Swat valley over the last decade has resulted in extreme control over women's mobility and girls' access to education in the area. Under the Taliban imposed severe Sharia law harsh and brutal punishments were meted out to both men and women for alleged flouting of codes of behavior that were repressive and based on Taliban's interpretation of Islam. There were however, cases where professional women (a Policy officer, a Medical Doctor) were able to continue working as long as they did not, or were not perceived to have, violated the dress and mobility restrictions imposed by the Taliban.

The Operation Black Thunderstorm led to a huge displacement of local population. Almost two million people became Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Swat and the Dir (Upper and Lower) Districts had been particularly hard hit as a result of the conflict. Swat District alone contributed to an estimated 57% of the total number of IDPs. In 2010, as people were returning and rebuilding their homes and lives with support from the government and other agencies, the region was severely affected by devastating floods that destroyed newly built bridges, roads, shops, schools, as well as homes and livelihoods once again. A resurgence of Taliban activity was seen in some parts of the district during this time; however, the government of Pakistan retained control. Notwithstanding government control over most of the area where the case study was carried out, there is still far too little engagement with the issue of women's economic empowerment. Even where women became the heads of households due to death or disappearance of the male head they were not approached by government officials regarding compensations or support.

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/04/201241583926475264.html>

<sup>50</sup> <http://unportal.un.org.pk/sites/UNPakistan/HC/WASH%20Maos/Swat.pdf>

## Methodology of the Research

- Desk Research
- Field interviews were carried out in September/October 2011 in the Swat Valley. The study focused on five villages in administrative areas of Saidu Sharif, Mingora, Odigram, Kabul and Tendodag. A total of twenty women, ranging from 20 to 60 years were interviewed individually.

Quite often women were nervous about being interviewed and in general did not wish to be on photo records as having given out information about their lives and their concerns. The trauma of displacement by Military Operation and floods has left most women in need of psychosocial rehabilitation. They began to depend on donor aid as IDPs and then as flood victims. The women we met said that they felt they were no longer able to help themselves or be self-reliant. Their instinct now is to expect aid, food or cash every time people from outside approach them.

## Key Findings

It should be noted here that the depth and number of interviews received from this Case Study stand up for further review and analysis. The Key Findings in this section by no means do full justice to the issues of the women in this region. The contextual focus of the study is on women's situation within the economic employment scenario of the area and how this is reflected through this case study.

Swat comprises a strongly male-dominant society. Women and girls have fewer opportunities for education and employment and have a number of restrictions imposed on them (i.e. with regard to dress and ability to move freely in the villages). The conflict in the area severely affected the women and their access to a means of livelihood. Women already having limited and unaccepted status in the workforce were further negatively affected by the conflict. For the area as a whole, tourism, a major source of income, was disrupted and still is in a precarious situation.

Even before the military offensive, civilians were being beheaded by the Taliban in the name of Islam and left in public places as a warning to others. The Taliban killed government employees calling them enemies of Islam. The men had to change their appearance. They grew beards and wore their *shalwars* (local baggy pants) above their ankles so that they were not threatened. Women had to observe stricter veil i.e. cover their faces when going out, that also only in groups or in male company.

Life became difficult when the war started. There were long curfews and it became problematic to leave home even for the males. Business and work suffered. Supply of electricity, water and gas became irregular or suspended.

Women faced sexual violence. During conflict the Taliban used to have forced sex with women. According to one woman, "*We heard many such stories and we were really scared about leaving our homes*". Women report that the Taliban tried to give quick justice and helped some women to get their rights of inheritance. However some also negated such reports, "*I don't believe in the justice of the Taliban. They were cruel and barbaric.*" According to women as there was a restriction placed on women's mobility by the Taliban they could not access their work places. Government jobs seemed to provide greater security for women, even in times of conflict – women teachers continued to receive their pays.

As Pakistan's military began its Operation villages were often given just hours – usually through warnings broadcast on the radio - to leave. They fled leaving behind their properties and businesses, fields, livestock and livelihoods. Many of those that did not immediately

take heed of the warnings became victims of the massive firepower exchanged between the military and the militants. People who left could not secure their homes or their assets.

Most of the infrastructure was destroyed / damaged during the operation by both the army and Taliban such as schools, colleges, hospitals, identification cards issuance centre, health facilities and educational institutions. Schools were looted and their

laboratory equipment was stolen. The Taliban destroyed many girls' schools. They were against the education of girls. Many bridges were blown up and roads destroyed.



After the operation, the army only consulted the men on rehabilitation and repatriation. There were no women personnel to talk to the women to ask about the needs of women. Even after the elected civilian government, no one is asking women on how the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Swat should happen.

Women are still suffering and unable to find work. After the military operation however, the men have returned to their labour work as there is a lot of reconstruction going on but the women have been unable to find opportunities for work. Women because of cultural taboos and mobility restrictions have not been able to organize themselves to take part in structured dialogues to identify their evolving recovery needs and priorities.

With regards to linking with International Treaties and Frameworks on Women's Rights, this is an exceptionally complex case study. Pakistan is engaged in an armed conflict of a non-international character. Non-international armed conflicts are regulated by common Article 3 to the 1949 *Geneva Conventions*, as well as other provisions of customary international law<sup>51</sup>. The changing nature of conflict challenges the existing frameworks of international human rights law and humanitarian law that can protect the rights of persons living in conflict affected areas.

What did become evident through the research was that the official institutions (military and para military) operating in conflict and post-conflict situations are quite unaware of the international commitments that the government has entered into. In fact, in the case of the Swat area of Pakistan an area which is largely run by the military, the civil administration is also unaware of the international obligations.

In order to extend the framework of state obligation to include the obligation of the state to protect its citizens from rights violations committed by non-state actors, to investigate and punish such acts of violence and to provide compensation, the concept of 'due diligence' has been brought to the foreground by several key international human rights mechanisms. This where a greater understanding of how to challenge the existing focus of international human rights law on state obligations to protect, promote, and fulfil the rights guaranteed in various international and legally binding treaties and agreements.

UNSCR1325 and other UNSCRs that support Women Peace and Security would be useful tools in the promotion of Women's Rights along with strategies employed within Critical Area E : Women and Armed Conflict of the Beijing Platform for Action.

<sup>51</sup> [http://www.adh-geneva.ch/RULAC/applicable\\_international\\_law.php?id\\_state=166](http://www.adh-geneva.ch/RULAC/applicable_international_law.php?id_state=166)



While the specific impact of conflict on women and on other marginalized groups has generated shifts in laws and policies designed to provide humanitarian assistance in conflict situations the situation of women's economic empowerment does not appear high on the agenda.

The Accra Declaration, 20 July 2010, on achieving the MDGs in crisis settings reflects on the opportunities for, and obstacles to, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in countries affected by conflict, armed violence and fragility, and vulnerable to the disruption caused by human and natural disasters, climate change and the global food, fuel and financial and economic crisis. It acknowledges that crises and the resulting disruption to economic growth and livelihoods, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, depletion of development assets and capacities, and the breakdown of the rule of law, justice and security are a major threat, not only to making new progress towards the MDGs, but even to the sustenance and consolidation of the hard-won gains towards the MDGs. Indeed, countries affected by violent conflict, armed violence, fragility and high vulnerability to disaster will find it extremely difficult to fully achieve the MDGs by 2015. It also declares that persistent inequality and a lack of progress towards the MDGs may increase the risk of conflict and armed violence.

The Pakistan government at the moment has not aligned its rehabilitation and repatriation activities with its international commitments, especially considering the Accra declaration and achievement of MDGs.





# Sri Lanka

Country : Sri Lanka  
Area of case study : Batticaloa District in Eastern Sri Lanka



Sri Lanka, officially the **Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka** is a country off the southern coast of the Indian subcontinent in South Asia.

The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Government of Sri Lanka (GOVS) spanned nearly 30 years. In 2009, the government won a military victory over the LTTE and direct military confrontations were ended. During the period of the conflict the Northern and Eastern districts of the country were most affected and thousands of families had to live with the repercussions of displacement, disappearances, death and economic hardships as a result of the war.

Research for this case study was carried out in Batticaloa, a district in the East of Sri Lanka which was directly affected by the conflict.

Batticaloa is one of the poorest districts in the country. Most women in Batticaloa are engaged in daily wage work, self-employment activities, unpaid family work, agriculture and fisheries related work for their daily income. However, most of this work happens in the margins of the market economy and is not valued. To date there is no gender-disaggregated data that shows women's contribution to the economy in the Batticaloa district.

According to the poverty head count index, Batticaloa district had the highest level of poverty in the country – 20.3%. And the poverty gap index is 5.1, again the highest in the country (national average is 1.7). The poverty gap index shows **how poor** the people are who are below the poverty line (Department of Census and Statistics 2011). However, as noted in the CEDAW Shadow Report, there is no national data on poverty which is sex disaggregated (WMC 2010).

## Methodology For Research

- Desk review
- 140 interviews in 2 villages in Batticaloa
- 3 key person interviews
- Inclusion of women's testimonies given at public meetings organized by WCDM in 2007 with government and non-government stakeholders (as background material)

In 2011, members of the Women's Coalition for Disaster Management (WCDM), Batticaloa, identified two villages affected by the conflict as well as the floods and conducted a survey following a methodology for systematic sampling of household lists provided by the DS. These villages were selected because there were member organisations working in these villages which could carry out the surveys, and also because there were many gender issues being addressed to the WCDM from these villages. The WCDM selected a 10% sample of the households in each village for the survey. Village data was collected from the DS office and every 10<sup>th</sup> household was systematically identified from the list.

## Key Findings

Poor women have to not only engage in the informal economy working in the margins under extreme vulnerabilities, they have to also take on most of the responsibilities in the care economy as well. They have to constantly juggle the demands on their time, narrowing their options and pushing them into poorly paid informal work.

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Poor women have to not only engage in the informal economy working in the margins under extreme vulnerabilities, they have to also take on most of the responsibilities in the care economy as well. They have to constantly juggle the demands on their time, narrowing their options and pushing them into poorly paid informal work. In the context of crises such as war, women become even more vulnerable. This study also documents the impact of macro development policies in the post war context on women's livelihoods, especially women who depend on subsistence economies related to agriculture.

There has been little acknowledgement of women's work and contribution to the informal economy, women's vital role in food security and subsistence livelihoods especially with very poor families. Some of the outcomes of these macro projects that have left women behind (such as mechanisation of agriculture production) have been in pushing these women

into risky work such as sex work or into migration work overseas. There needs to be more systematic research into the current economic policies and programs being implemented in the post war context in terms of the impact on women in Batticaloa.

*'Issues of livelihood for women in this region of Sri Lanka are integrally tied to issues of permanent resettlement. Relocation of fishing communities and other communities whose lives and livelihoods are tightly tied to their living on or close to the beach poses a major problem'<sup>52</sup>.*

Communities in Batticaloa have lived through multiple displacements and resettlements due to the war, and most recently due to the flood disaster. Trying to rebuild their lives again and again in the face of continuous violence and displacement is not easy, especially for women who are vulnerable as women headed households. Participants in this research



who were displaced during conflict returned to this area to rebuild their homes, or to live in resettlement villages. However, heavy rains and flooding in Batticaloa in 2011 led to many villages being displaced and women losing their homes and possessions yet again.

In very rural and poor areas women had lost their assets, homes and livelihoods such as livestock. They also lost their harvests. After going back to their damaged homes, they faced many restrictions to engage with their normal livelihoods such as fishing, collecting honey, chena cultivation (slash and burn), paddy farming, collecting firewood and growing vegetables. Lack of mobility due to military restrictions further affected livelihoods and limited access to fuel which further impacted on women's lives.

In both villages, 2 out of every 10 women were the main income earners for their families. Most of these women in both villages were below the poverty line. What this translates to is women (and their children) eating two or less meals a day as they could not afford to eat 3 meals a day.

Widows and women heads of household are common in this area, From the sample taken, 2 out of every 10 women were running their homes without spousal support in both villages. All participants had families of 5 or more people.

Many women's husbands disappeared and they did not receive any information about them.

The cost of war paid by ordinary civilians in the resettlement areas has been their systematic spiral into chronic poverty, loss of assets, debt, and slow malnutrition. The inability to earn a decent income from traditional occupations has also meant that people have resorted to other forms of work such as brewing illicit liquor. Sometimes, women have also had to engage in sex work to be able to earn an income.

<sup>52</sup> Emmanuel, S & Maunaguru, S (Eds) (2007) *Women Responding to Disasters Challenges and Experiences from South Asia*, Suriya Women's Development Center p 9 pp 1

Following the military operations, there was a sudden flood of cheap labour from other districts which negatively impacted the work opportunities of the daily wage workers from the conflict affected villages in Batticaloa. Since the usage of machines in agriculture production has increased, the need for labour has reduced, leading to the reduction of work for daily wage earners in the agriculture sector.

Local fishermen were also concerned about the big boats which were now coming into their waters from other parts of the country. Women were particularly affected by the cheap vegetables that were flooding the local markets from outside the district, as they were unable to sell their own local produce. This was a very serious concern as women were struggling to recover from the devastation of the military offensive, months of displacement, loss of their assets and damages to their homes.

*What we did not clearly see, however, was the income generating activities provided to women in conflict areas be outside of “sex-stereotyped activities” such as sewing or beauty culture (p. 44)*

Due to the lack of work and restrictions to work and mobility, people were involved in preparing arrack (illicit liquor) and other homemade arrack to earn an income. This has lead to other social problems such as domestic violence.

Some of the issues identified by women were the heavy use of alcohol by men and women. There were also multiple sexual relationships, ‘early marriages’ among teenage girls and boys, abandonment of young girls after marriage, early pregnancies, and multiple marriages. To date, there have been very poor legal and social mechanisms in place to respond adequately and sensitively to these issues. These gendered experiences were sometimes the outcome of the inability of men and women to rebuild their lives through dignified means. The restrictions on mobility where men and women could not travel to find work meant that people were forced to be within a small space with nothing to do the whole day. Also living with the constant fear of reprisals and disappearances took its toll on the psychosocial wellbeing of families and communities. Additionally, men were unable to provide for their families. Traumatic experiences of the ordinary men, women and children were not acknowledged and this often led to deep feelings of helplessness and despair.

In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, where people were just resettled, the relief provided by the State was haphazard. Food coupons (ration cards) were issued by the government but the quality of the food was very poor and the rations were not given on time as promised. Often days passed where they had access to very little food. Women spoke of drinking a cup of plain tea to survive the day.

In analyzing economic empowerment of women in post-conflict regions in Sri Lanka, we researched a sample of donor and government programmes that both targeted post-conflict development in the North and East of Sri Lanka and provided income generating activities and livelihood development for women in the conflict affected areas. This is not an extensive list, but a sampling of such programmes. The timeline we focused on was programmes that are being implemented during and after 2008.

Countries that donated in the sample of programmes analyzed herewith are, the United States of America, India, Japan, and Canada. Intergovernmental Organizations through which funds came in are the World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and United Nations Development Program (UNDP). International country specific governmental and non-governmental organizations include the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) of India. Sri Lankan governmental



programmes looked into are the MahindaChintana 2010, DiviNaguma and Samurdhi Social Protection Programme.

There were many other programmes implemented by local NGOs which we could not include in the literature review due to the lack of time. We mainly focussed on the big bilateral and multilateral funding programmes. We also note that while there were various cash-for-work opportunities provided to both men and women in these conflict affected areas, we did not include them in this report as those forms of income were temporary. Where cash for work programmes were mentioned, we were informed that men and women were paid an equal rate. For example, according to the Director Planning of Batticaloa District, in the post-war reconstruction cash-for-work programme, the GOSL ensured that both men and women were paid equal wages, receiving LKR 500 per person for a day's work.

It must be noted that each of these projects had various components including livelihood development, small scale construction projects, small industry development, implementation and monitoring. It is typically through the livelihood development component within these programmes that we found specific income generating activities for women. Additionally, many of these programmes state that they will be targeting 'war widows' and 'women headed households.'

It was not always possible to assert what sorts of assistance was given specifically to women as often the projects targeted sectors such as paddy cultivation, agriculture, dairy, fisheries etc., but did not mention the specific support given to women. Where women were mentioned, there was a general focus on home gardens, fruit gardens, poultry and livestock and small shops. There was also an emphasis on garment factory employment.

What this case study report highlights is the enormity of the loss and the costs borne by the poorest of the poor communities in the conflict affected areas when the state and militant groups engaged in armed war fare. This cost is often invisible or is not acknowledged. These costs need to be quantified to bring into the public eye those who bear the costs of war. In our two village studies (that is 10% of a sample population) we found that the poorest of the poor paid more than LKR 5 million for the war. If we extrapolate that to the total village population, it becomes LKR 50 million, and this is just two villages in the Batticaloa District. There needs to be an acknowledgement of this loss which will also be the basis on which women can demand for more resources to be allocated for them, their communities and the war affected regions.



Though there appear to be many programmes being implemented, these do not respond to the enormity of the issues around poverty and economic vulnerability of women.

Some of the projects were conceptualised in terms of incorporating poor communities into private sector lead macro production processes – such as mechanised agriculture, garment industries and macro fisheries projects. There has been little acknowledgement of women's work and contribution to the informal economy, women's vital role in food

<sup>53</sup> Women and Media Collective (WMC). July 2010. Sri Lanka Shadow Report To the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Colombo.



security and subsistence livelihoods especially with very poor families. Some of the outcomes of these macro projects that have left women behind (such as mechanisation of agriculture production) have been in pushing women into risky work such as sex work or into migration work overseas. There needs to be more systematic research into the current economic policies and programmes being implemented in the post war context in terms of the impact on women in Batticaloa.

The CEDAW Shadow Report presented to the CEDAW committee in 2012, sheds light to various forms of discrimination women in Sri Lanka are prone to and the lack of attention, in general, to specific issues women face. Under the subsection, 'Women and Armed Conflict' special attention is brought on to the need of providing suitable employment and income generating options for Women Head of Households (WHHs)<sup>53</sup> (WMC 2010, p.44–45).

All of the programmes, both government and donor, highlighted in this report have specifically targeted this group of women and made them a priority in receiving assistance. What we did not clearly see, however, was the income generating activities provided to women in conflict areas be outside of "sex-stereotyped activities" such as sewing or beauty culture (p. 44). The only clear exception to this was the vocational training areas incorporated through SEWA. Many of the assistance programmes provide the same livelihood options and there is an over supply in the village. The women assisted these programmes also target the very poor as their market who have limited purchasing power to begin with.

In recognising women head of households, one of the most vulnerable populations post-conflict, we also must be sensitive to the needs of those women who do not fit the WHH criteria, but are nevertheless prone to various hardships post conflict. In the Shadow Report's 'Rural Women' subsection that directly links Article 14 of the CEDAW, it is noted that: *'When women are identified as project beneficiaries, the major focus generally is on widows and female headed households ignoring the overwhelming majority of poor women who contribute to the household economy.'* This article of CEDAW becomes very important in lobbying for strong support for women in the post conflict context of Sri Lanka. What comes through from the literature review of the government and donor programmes analysed in this case study is the gross inadequacy of these programmes to respond to the tremendous loss suffered by the most poor and vulnerable communities of Batticaloa. The inadequacy is both in scale as well as in the amount of assistance women have access to.

Another fundamental issue is in relation to how war affected communities have been perceived. There has not been enough discussion and debate on the following questions – are generalised assistance programmes the best way to help those who live in chronic poverty way below the poverty line? Do macro development projects address the vulnerabilities of rural women? When post war economies become open to external investments and markets the impact on poor women attempting to rebuild their lives is tremendous. One participant spoke of attempting to grow and sell rice, and how she failed to sell her produce as rice coming from outside the local markets was being sold at a lower rate. She faced similar challenges in selling vegetables as well

Article 14 of CEDAW, gives eight rights rural women should have. Three of them are as follows: the right to, "participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels . . . organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self employment . . . to participate in all community activities" (2003). The programme documents reviewed for this report mentioned that they would focus on increasing women's involvement in local level planning and decision making for example through Women's Rural Development Society (WRDSs). However, some of these ambitious goals did not always workout as planned and while women were the majority of participants in various training programmes their

representation in the planning and management component of projects was less than satisfactory.

Even with such measures, however, sustainability of a programme cannot be guaranteed since the local communities willingness to keep participating in various initiatives of the project (CBOs, WRDSs, etc.) as well as support from local governments are crucial in maintaining the project initiatives. Ultimately, the most important factor that will determine the success and sustainability of any post conflict economic empowerment project is a cultural understanding that women's empowerment is crucial for the empowerment of the entire country.







**Joining the Dots...** Field Visit in Sri Lanka August 2011.



## Research Partners

### **Justice Equality Rights Access (JERA) International**

JERA International promotes justice, equality, rights and access and uses a practical and rights-based approach to work with women and men to achieve positive and sustainable change in the community. We work in Australia, the Asia Pacific Region and internationally.

JERA works in partnership with groups and networks of women and men towards common goals and outcomes to advance and to promote positive action to achieve gender equality, individual and community based economic development and to create an environment for growth and sustainable enterprises in the community. JERA draws from its vast network of gender expertise to support practical projects. Recent projects have included the national review of women's rights for the United Nations 15 year review of the Beijing Platform for Action; chief consultant with government for the drafting of a national action plan on women, peace and security; analysis and drafting for the CEDAW Shadow report and is a member of the FaHCSIA Gender Panel, a panel of gender experts who lend support to government agencies.

JERA works as a conduit between community and decision-makers, providing opportunity, access, training, and expertise linkages. JERA undertakes innovative and practical processes, with its network of gender expertise, promoting and making linkages for evidence based decision making for policy: state and federal. JERA promotes the advancement of women and their communities through research, key policy dialogue, practical project and program implementation and partnerships with key actors.

In this project, JERA International will work actively with the APWW secretariat and support the regional training, analysis and presentation of the report presenting a unique gendered insight into the ways in which UNSCR 1325, BPFA and CEDAW can be used to strengthen the MDG strategies to support the economic empowerment of women in conflict affected areas.

### **Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW)**

Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW), is a Non Government Organisation (NGO) in Special Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Consultative Status with the United Nations. It has a extensive membership of women's organizations and groups across the Asia Pacific Region. APWW operates as a regional network for women, monitoring and collaborating with United Nations, national governments and NGOs to take action to advance women. It serves five (5) sub-regions – Central Asia, East Asia, the Pacific, South Asia and South East Asia with representatives from each of the three (3) major networks: Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), Isis International and Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW). Unique to APWW is the diversity of the membership with women from different Asia Pacific communities coming together to work on common issues identified across the region. APWW Steering Committee Members head or assist organizations in the gathering of national data and coordinate regional statements for NGO input into the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) Meetings held annually at the



United Nations in New York, and coordinate NGO regional input into the Beijing Platform for Action Review years (held each 5 years).

With the mission of Gender Equality, Development and Peace, APWW aims to:

- Monitor and lobby for Asia Pacific women's perspectives to be included in international documents and processes;
- Promote gender mainstreaming in all decision-making structures;
- Disseminate information on good practices and lessons learned in advancing the status of women;
- Build capacity in communication technologies, media strategies and lobbying;
- Enhance women's leadership in peace-making;
- Advocate to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women;
- Encourage sustainable rights-based development; and
- Strive for economic justice for women.

The location of the Secretariat for APWW is currently in Colombo, Sri Lanka, housed with the Women and Media Collective (WMC), a local women's NGO. Rotation of the Secretariat occurs each 2 years with the rotation of the Chair, each sub-region being offered the opportunity to Chair and host the secretariat on a rotational basis.

## **Women and Media Collective (WMC)**

The Women and Media Collective (WMC) was established in 1984 by a group of Sri Lankan feminists interested in exploring conceptual and practical issues of concern to women in Sri Lanka. The mission of WMC is to develop a feminist perspective on contemporary social, economic, political and cultural issues with the aim of changing the situation of Sri Lankan women in a positive and progressive manner. Envisioning a just society that does not discriminate on the basis of gender, WMC's goal is to bring about change based on feminist principles, within a rights framework, for a society free from violence and militarization, which would pave the way for a balanced representation of women in decision-making and governance, and advocate for non-discriminatory laws and policies.

WMC has been publishing three feminist magazines Options in English (since 1994), Eya in Sinhala (since 1995) and Sol in Tamil (since 2006). In 1993 WMC became a founding member of the Sri Lanka Women's NGO Forum (for Beijing) which has since focused on monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Sri Lanka.

Over the past 25 years WMC's achievements were identified by its network of women's groups as facilitating the creation of space in Sri Lanka for discourse on Feminism, Women's Rights, Political Participation and Peace Advocacy.

In 1991 the WMC helped found the Suriya Women's Development Centre in Batticaloa, to address the situation of displaced women; in December 2002 the WMC facilitated the setting up of the Sub Committee on Gender Issues, which was an advisory body to the plenary of the peace process at the time between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE. WMC is now a leading organization in Sri Lanka that works the rights of women migrant workers, gender and sexuality issues and on adapting UNSCR 1325 in post conflict Sri Lanka. In 2010, the WMC prepared and submitted an NGO Shadow Report to the CEDAW Committee. It is currently a member of the International advocacy group for the inclusion of a General Recommendation to CEDAW on Women and Armed Conflict.





This report explores how four key human rights instruments could be applied in the context of women's economic empowerment in post-conflict situations. It is based on a research project carried out in 6 countries in the Asia Pacific region, Fiji, Aceh, Sri Lanka Nepal, Pakistan and Kyrgystan by Asia Pacific Women's Watch, JERA International, Australia and, the Women and Media Collective, Sri Lanka.

Supported by



*The views in this report are not necessarily those of AusAID.*

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