

Gender, Conflict and Fragile States

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PSO Seminar

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- Peace Security & Development Network (PSDN)
- Millennium Accords and MDGs
- Fragile state and conflict and post-conflict settings (all problematic notions)
- Emerging discourse of fragile states in policy world largely gender-blind
- WGC aims at filling this gap through (action) research
- Overview major findings so far

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- Relationship gender and state fragility
- Definitions fragile state (no consensus)
- Review of donors' fragile state policies
- Gender-blindness and reasons
- Gender realities on the ground in fragile states
- Lack of statehood vs. hybrid political orders
- Recommendations

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- Background: relationship Millennium Accords & MDGs and fragile state settings
- Gender dimension of the nexus between MGD performance and state fragility ignored
- Neither gendered understanding of state fragility as such, nor of its impact on gender, e.g. masculine nature of state and the impact of state policies on gender roles and relations

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- No donor (or academic) consensus on notion of state fragility or fragile state
- Definitions comprise different components and result in different lists of fragile countries
- Major aspects of fragility: functionality, output or relationship with donors

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Working group's 'working definition':

“Fragile States are those states which have severe social tensions with negative consequences to the population. The economy is underdeveloped (high levels of poverty) or declining and economic opportunities are unequally divided. The government lacks legitimacy and is incapable or unwilling to deliver basic public services; it lacks the legitimate monopoly on violence and is unable or unwilling to safeguard the rule of law and the protection of human rights”

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- All nine major donors studied by the WGC include following indicators: lack of legitimacy, lack of capacity, insecurity and inability to deliver public services.
- Some include economic (poverty), social (fractionalisation of society) and legal (rule of law) factors
- Two donors used state oppression as an indicator

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Social indicators

1. Social division along ethnic, religious, racial, ideological and clan lines
2. Legacy of vengeance-seeking group grievance or group paranoia
3. Mounting demographic pressures
4. Massive movement of refugees or internally displaced persons creating complex humanitarian emergencies
5. Chronic and sustained human flight

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Economic indicators

6. Uneven economic development along group lines
7. Sharp and/or severe economic decline, high levels of inflation
8. High levels of poverty.
9. Unequal access & control and poor management of natural resources
10. High unemployment rates
11. Inability to collect taxes

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Political indicators

12. Criminalization and/or delegitimization of the state
13. Progressive deterioration of public services
14. Suspension or arbitrary application of the rule of law and widespread violation of human rights
15. Security apparatus operates as a “state within a state”, including an all powerful military.
16. Rise of factionalized elites

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- No monitoring and pro-active use of indicators by most donors
- Intervention perspective weak also due to lack of consensus and harmonisation
- Despite gender centrality and impact in fragile states' realities, gender was for long no strong consideration in donors' fragile state discourse and policies
- Recently some progress made

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- Reasons for gender-blindness: good-enough-governance (DFID) and the notion of 'realistic priorities' (UNDG)
- Yet, even gender-blind programmes *do* have gender impacts, but without the ability to steer them
- Realities on the ground show strong links between state fragility and gender issues

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- Education for girls made impossible interrupted
- No reproductive and sexual health services
- Economic activities and female entrepreneurship compounded due to lack of economic forward and backward linkages and lack of mobility
- Violence and impunity (also post-conflict)

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- On the other hand: Empirical studies (Caprioli) suggest strong links between gender equality, security and peace in practice
- That means, if investments and attainments can be realised in terms of more gender equality, this will go together with higher levels of (human) security and peace (

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- Lack of statehood, yet existence of parallel regulation and dispute resolution mechanisms (especially in the absence of a strong state).
- ‘Hybrid political orders’, ‘twilight institutions’ or ‘mediated state’
- Combination of modern and traditional structures in competition or collaboration with the weak or fragile state (examples)

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“In hybrid political orders, diverse and competing authority structures, sets of rules, logics of order, and claims to power co-exist, overlap, interact, and intertwine, combining elements of introduced Western models of governance and elements stemming from local indigenous traditions of governance and politics, with further influences exerted by the forces of globalization and associated societal fragmentation (in various forms: ethnic, tribal, religious). In this environment, the ‘state’ has no privileged monopolistic position as the only agency providing security, welfare, and representation; it has to share authority, legitimacy, and capacity with other institutions” (Boege et al., 2009: 17)

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- Risk of hybrid orders: prevalence of patriarchal cultural, traditional and religious norms and practices
- Counteracting an enabling environment for gender equality, women's empowerment and women's rights
- Women's groups are challenging those hybrid orders in their work, but little is known how this exactly works

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- Recommendations:
- Joint working definitions and gender-disaggregated indicators of state fragility can and should be developed
- It is necessary to study *how* state fragility impacts on gender relations and produces gendered conflict and violence and *how* gender inequalities in one domain translate into other domains

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- Further recommendations:
- Donor supported fragile state policies and practices should become more gender-sensitive
- They should consider gender as fundamentally implied in state fragility and not as a side-product
- Fragile state settings also offer opportunities for gender transformation

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- Further recommendations:
- Hybrid political orders are a better point of departure for policy than models of western statehood that never existed in most fragile state settings
- Hybrid political orders should be scrutinised on their gender impacts and activities be developed to counteract negative impacts and support women groups