Women’s Roles in Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Reconstruction:

Literature Review and Institutional Analysis

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Summary

At the request of the Directorate of Coordination Emancipation Policy at the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the Conflict Research Unit (CRU) of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations ‘Clingendael’ - in cooperation with International Alert London, Utrecht University, Wageningen Disaster Studies and various individual consultants - commissioned a research study into the roles of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. With this purpose the CRU undertook a review of selected literature on the roles and positions of women before, during and after armed conflict.

In addition, the CRU embarked on an institutional analysis of sixteen (inter)national organizations that aim to improve the position of women in armed conflicts through peacekeeping missions, peace negotiation, peacebuilding, humanitarian aid, development assistance, and international tribunals and courts. The organizations included: 1) United Nations Security Council (SC); 2) United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO); 3) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); 4) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR); 5) World Food Programme (WFP); 6) International Labour Organization (ILO); 7) International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); 8) North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); 9) Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); 10) Council of Europe (CoE); 11) Gender Task Force (GTF) of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe; 12) International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY); 13) International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR); 14) International Criminal Court (ICC); 15) Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA); and 16) Netherlands Ministry of Defence (MoD).

The CRU analysed each organization’s mandate, policy, structure, expertise, activities and budget from the perspective of women and armed conflict. The individual profile of each organization is added in an appendix to this report. Each appendix includes recommendations for the Dutch government to support the work of these organizations in the field of women and armed conflict. The appendices also articulate how the Dutch government could strengthen its own performance on this topic.

A Review Panel consisting of representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Social Affairs and Employment monitored the research process. All organizations under study have had the opportunity to comment on the research findings, and their comments have been incorporated in the final report. The outcomes of the study have also been discussed at a round-table conference with academics, policy-makers and practitioners, whose observations have also been added to the report.

1 For the sake of brevity, the basic focus of this study, namely ‘women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction’, will be referred to as ‘women in armed conflict’. Whenever the latter is used it should be realized that this encapsulates the activities mentioned in the longer formulation.
Literature Review

Policies
The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) brought the topic of women and armed conflict to international attention. Another milestone is the acceptance of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Various other departments within the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of Europe have increasingly developed statements and policies on this topic, of which the report provides a short overview.

Roles and Positions of Women in Armed Conflict
Conflict and gender analyses must not only pay attention to the so-called gender characteristics of women and men respectively, but should also take into account the diversity among women and their different roles and positions in armed conflict. Women are a heterogeneous group of social actors, who on the one hand are determined to take on certain positions and roles in conflicts, but on the other hand deliberately choose to fulfil certain roles based on their strategies and goals. Women must thus not only be seen as passive victims of armed conflict, but as capable actors as well. They have even benefited from the windows of opportunity that conflict situations offer them. Although women do suffer in conflict, there are examples of women whose positions have improved during conflict, for instance through the expansion of women’s economic and political responsibilities.

On the basis of selected literature, the CRU has developed a framework for analysis that analytically identifies seven major roles of women before, during and after armed conflict. In practice these roles could overlap or coincide, and obviously differ in place and time. Individual women could also take on various roles at the same time. The report analyses each role in depth and discusses the implications and challenges for policy-makers addressing these roles.

Women as Victims
Contemporary conflicts increasingly target the civilian population, whereby women often suffer from systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence. Since women are usually regarded as symbolic bearers of caste, ethnic or national identity, sexual violence against women is a deliberate strategy to humiliate an entire community. Sexual violence often continues in the post-conflict phase, shifting from the public to the private space of homes.

Women as Combatants
Women have actively participated in numerous wars. Their motives for becoming combatants appear to be as diverse as those for men, including enforced recruitment, agreement with the goals of war, patriotism, religious or ideological motives, and economic necessity. After conflict, female (ex-)combatants regularly encounter difficulties while reintegrating into society. Demobilization and reintegration programmes scarcely take into account their specific needs and
interests. Neither does family. Female ex-combatants are often not accepted, despised, and traumatized socially.

**Women as Peace Activists**
Conflict situations often force women to organize themselves in order to safeguard their basic necessities and to carry out activities related to education, health care, food distribution and care for family, internally displaced persons and refugees. Due to the (temporary) absence of men, women also assume political responsibilities. In spite of the difficulties encountered, many of these peace activities do have an emancipating function and should therefore also be continued in the post-conflict phase.

**Women in ’Formal Peace Politics’**
Only a small number of women actually participate in formal peace negotiations. Usually their contribution to conflict resolution and peacebuilding is regarded as positive. Women bring diverse conflict experiences, they represent different interest groups and set other priorities than men. On the basis of women’s interests, they are able to form coalitions bridging deep political, ethnic and religious divides. Their participation in the actual peace talks often fosters a wider popular mandate for peace, making it more sustainable. It is of the essence that women participate in (re)writing the constitution and other legislation in a post-conflict phase in order to guarantee their long-term interests and rights.

**Women as Coping and Surviving Actors**
Women have shown the capacity to survive in extremely difficult circumstances such as conflict by developing ways of coping with life. They have thereby displayed a remarkable resilience in adapting to their new living conditions.

**Women as Household Heads**
Many conflicts have forced women to become household heads and breadwinners, taking over responsibility for various activities traditionally carried out by men. Women are often not equipped for this and lack access to education, training, land, credit, waged labour and other resources. The most common obstacle for female-headed households and widows is their limited land and property rights. They are usually prohibited from owning, renting and inheriting land and property in their own names. In the post-conflict phase, when husbands and male relatives return home, the traditional division of roles and tasks tends to be restored again.

**Women and (In)formal Employment Opportunities**
A substantial number of women are driven into badly remunerated work in the informal sector, which tends to expand rapidly in conflict situations as formal structures cease to function. Because of the great need for human resources in post-conflict rehabilitation activities, formal employment opportunities for women initially increase, although later they often decrease because of the return of men and the reintroduction of traditional labour divisions. In some post-conflict situations, neo-liberal economic policies imposed by the IMF and World Bank have negatively influenced women’s working conditions.
Challenges in Policy and Practice

Intervening agencies that aim to address women’s roles and positions in armed conflict face numerous challenges. One such challenge, for instance, is to employ more women as civil and military professionals in Multidimensional Peace Operations and also to sensitize these operations’ male professionals for gender. Another challenge would be increasingly to adapt external interventions to the needs and interests of local women in armed conflict (‘gender-sensitizing’ policies). One condition for this is to formulate policies on the basis of a sound gender analysis, clarifying the interrelationship between women and men, the specific conflict situation and the potential differential impact of external interventions of women and men. The starting point for all such policies must be to aim for gender equality. In striving for gender equality in conflict situations, it is of the essence that international agencies develop instruments and methodologies that combine gender and conflict analysis. Another condition is that intervening agencies should already address women’s needs and interests in the pre-conflict phase and not just in the post-conflict phase so that women’s exposure to insecurity and violence is limited. Agencies must not only aim to reduce women’s suffering in the short term, but must also intend supporting women’s long-term strategic interests. They should support to the utmost women’s changing roles, positions and identities in conflict situations, as long as these have an emancipating effect.

There are numerous interventions possible to target women increasingly and explicitly before, during and after armed conflict. For instance, agencies could involve more women in early-warning and response processes in order to protect them from an increased exposure to insecurity and violence. Programmes to restore civilian security, such as security sector reforms, greater representation of women in police forces and judicial processes, de-mining and the non-proliferation of small arms programmes, form a unique opportunity to render the prevailing security actors and systems more gender-sensitive. Trauma counselling during and after the conflict could recognize the different ways in which women and men deal with traumas. Truth Commissions and National Reconciliation Processes should pay more attention to female-based violence and should equally consider women’s and men’s specific needs and interests in the formulation of reparation and rehabilitation policies. International Tribunals and Courts should continue and perhaps expand their special legal and social support to female witnesses and female victims of sexual violence. Agencies could prevent women from becoming combatants in conflict by for instance providing a safe space for non-war action and creating alternative economic sources to the military. They could make demobilization and reintegration programmes more equally accessible to female and male combatants and may possibly take women’s and men’s different experiences and interests into account. More intervention, particularly in the pre-conflict and actual conflict phases, could support the strengthening and formation of sustainable women’s organizations that play an active and constructive role in the peace process. It is of the essence that interventions increase women’s political participation through training, awareness-raising campaigns and quota systems ensuring a minimum participation of female politicians. Intervention might provide more female breadwinners, households with productive assets and legal assistance in the fields of housing, property and labour rights. They could simultaneously
address women’s needs for employment and income generation in the informal and formal sector, thereby avoiding gender-stereotyped activities. Instead they could preferably facilitate women’s employment in ‘non-traditional’ sectors and skills, for instance through quick-impact but sustainable micro-credit schemes and initiatives to create women-friendly employment conditions.

The steps and interventions mentioned here to address women’s roles and positions in armed conflict must not only be undertaken in the post-conflict phase, which many international agencies tend to do, but also in the pre-conflict and actual conflict phase. The practical challenge now is to translate these steps and interventions into concrete guidelines and procedures, and to stimulate intervening agencies to act in the field accordingly.

Institutional Analysis

Background
The sixteen organizations analysed vary substantially in their mandates, target groups, areas of competence and geographical coverage. Hence, the overall aim of the institutional analysis is not to compare the different organizations or to measure their performance, but instead to learn from their mutual experiences and to identify how lessons derived from one organization’s practice can be of relevance to the others in strengthening the roles and positions of women in armed conflict. The aim of the institutional analysis is also to ascertain what pertinent components, both at policy and practical level, require further attention to reinforce the prevailing structures and practices of the organizations engaged in the field of women in armed conflict. Ultimately, this institutional analysis must facilitate the organizations under study, as well as the Dutch Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs, and Social Affairs and Employment, to improve their performance on the roles and positions of women in armed conflict.

The main consideration of the institutional analysis has been to what degree and how women and/or gender mainstreaming have taken place in the policy practice of the organizations under study. In concreto, the analysis has scrutinized how the topic of women in armed conflict is incorporated in the organizations’ mandate, policy, structure, expertise, engagement, activities, instruments, and budget.

Organizations and Women in Armed Conflict
Some organizations are evidently working in conflict but seem to lack a particular focus on women in conflict situations, while others put a heavy emphasis on the issue of women but tend to have a less articulated approach towards armed conflict. Other organizations explicitly focus on women in crisis situations, trying to emphasize particular women’s roles or problems. It can be observed that the more explicitly and articulately the organizations relate to the topic of women in armed conflict, the more chance there is that they actually take it into account in their policies and concrete activities. Lack of explicitness may lead to ‘women or gender blindness’. Particularly in multilateral organizations, a clear division of responsibility is sometimes lacking, which causes
confusion about whether the organization or its member states should take up the issue of women in armed conflict. In some organizations there are different perceptions on the topic, whereby gender units or gender specialists often have a more comprehensive perception about women in armed conflict than the rest of the organization, which could be regarded as due to lack of mainstreaming of the issue. Most organizations do not address all women’s roles and positions in armed conflict and usually encounter difficulties in linking women’s short-term needs with women’s strategic, long-term interests. Few organizations actually link relief, rehabilitation and development efforts. Equally, they do not address women in all conflict phases, but concentrate their efforts in the post-conflict phase. All in all, it can be concluded that most organizations address a few women’s roles largely in the post-conflict phase.

**Policy**
In recent years a dynamic movement towards a more explicit and specific reference to women in armed conflict can be noticed in the organizations’ policies. As shown in this report, the overall number of policy initiatives regarding women in armed conflict is huge and consequently there exists a considerable potential for fruitful exchange and mutual learning. It is acknowledged that there is no uniform path regarding the development of women and armed conflict policies. However, an important lesson learned is that to develop an effective and transparent policy on women in armed conflict, women and gender policies have to be translated into concrete plans of actions and qualitative/quantitative targets and benchmarks, which are continuously monitored and evaluated. It is also of the essence to develop mechanisms to hold states accountable for not taking on internationally agreed gender policies and objectives, such as the Security Council Resolution 1325. Moreover, sustainable gender policies, particularly of multilateral agencies, can only be achieved through steady (financial) contributions and coherent policy positions by member states.

**Structure, Expertise and Engagement**
Each organization analysed does have a gender structure and has to varying degrees developed in-house expertise on women, gender and armed conflict. Only one organization has mainstreamed gender into its structure in a nearly complete fashion by making all employees responsible for taking up gender in their activities. Typical gender structures are usually characterized by a combination of an intra-organizational and external gender policy, the employment of gender experts at headquarters and field level, and by the appointment of specialized gender experts, units and networks throughout the organization. A continuous challenge is to share the expertise on women/gender issues throughout the organizational structure, not only among the gender experts but among all staff. Another is to combat the lack of gender experts that are specialized in both gender and conflict. More specialized gender experts in the field of women and armed conflict, particularly males, should be educated and recruited. To create commitment to gender and particularly to the topic of women in armed conflict has been shown to be hard. Involvement of the top management has, however, given a strong impetus in various organizations. Some organizations have enhanced the commitment by upgrading the status, position and influence of gender units, experts and networks. Other organizations have created commitment by ensuring that gender experts can spend enough time and resources on the topic, for example by limiting
their portfolios and expanding the number of gender experts. Making gender-related achievements part of the organization’s personnel recruitment and appraisal systems may also enhance the staff’s commitment.

**Activities and Instruments**

The report discerns two sorts of gender-related activities and instruments: a) those that relate to women and gender in general; and b) those that the organization has specifically developed with respect to women in armed conflict. In the report, general gender-related instruments and activities include normative instruments, training and capacity-building, implementation of programmes and (pilot) projects, monitoring and evaluation, internal reporting and management, and consultation/research/communication. The report gives various concrete examples per type of instrument. Specific activities and instruments for women in armed conflict comprise *inter alia* special guidelines to enhance the protection and assistance of women affected by conflict, provision of material and psychological support to female victims of sexual assault by tribunals, and pre-deployment courses for peacekeepers and military observers. For a full overview of specific initiatives, refer to chapter 5 of part II.

A complete and wholehearted implementation of the available instruments and activities has rarely taken place. According to various organizations this has mainly to do with the relative novelty of the theme of women in armed conflict and misconceptions about the notion of gender. Proper information is needed to avoid such a situation. Furthermore, little information is available on the medium- and longer-term impact of gender-related initiatives, a condition that organizations could counter by developing a more coherent gender system, ranging from agenda-setting, policy development, implementation, and effective monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, the idea of ‘the more activities on women in armed conflict the better’ seems not to be valid. Gender-related information too often overloads staff. The challenge discerned here is to divide into doses the organization’s women/gender guidelines and instruments.

**Budget**

In most organizations under study the gender budget is integrated into the overall budget. Although gender is then fully mainstreamed, the downside is that the gender budget is often no longer quantifiable and visible. To partly compensate for this, some organizations have in addition established separate gender trust funds. Recently some organizations have also taken the initiative of gender-sensitizing their budgets, aiming to combine the potentially broad coverage and effectiveness of mainstreaming, while promoting the visibility and transparency that is normally associated with gender-specific budgets.

**Suggestions for the Dutch Government to Strengthen the Organizations’ Performance on Women’s Roles in Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-conflict Reconstruction**

The institutional analysis identifies various suggestions and measures for the Dutch government - *in concreto* for the Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Social Affairs and Employment - to facilitate the organizations under study to strengthen the roles and positions of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. These include to: 1) gather
additional data on the exact roles of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction; 2) collect more best practices of how women’s roles in the field have been addressed so far; 3) further translate (existing) policies into practice by setting specific objectives and developing concrete guidelines; 4) monitor/evaluate/review the activities undertaken and outputs achieved so far in order to ‘measure’ whether and how women’s roles have been strengthened; 5) increase the number of women and gender-sensitive men at all levels of the organization and particularly in the field of conflict-related interventions; 6) increase the participation of local women in the preparation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of all field activities focusing on women’s roles in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction; 7) enhance the commitment among all staff that deal with the issue of women in armed conflict; 8) enhance expertise in this field by providing staff training, but also training for local women and women’s organizations. Training must be adapted to the specific mandate and activities of each organization, to the specific conflict situation, and to the specific traumas and vulnerabilities of the local women and men addressed in the field. Training should also include models for inter alia gender issues in general, women’s roles in conflict situations in particular, cultural and historical backgrounds of the mission areas, and the scope and contents of International Humanitarian Law, which is of specific importance for all interventions in conflict-related situations; 9) increasingly incorporate gender and conflict issues into the organization’s activities, instruments and tools, e.g. needs assessments, community participatory approaches, mapping of vulnerabilities and so on; 10) further link the fields of, experts in, and information on women, gender and armed conflict.

In chapter 7 of part II the suggestions and measures mentioned here are further elaborated by connecting them to specific conflict-related fields or themes, and to concrete intra-ministerial responsibilities. These fields or themes include peace-support operations, humanitarian or emergency assistance and development cooperation, international courts and tribunals, and the fields of democratization, human rights and (peace) politics. Intra-ministerial responsibilities concern the tasks and activities to be taken up by the Dutch ministries’ different directorates and units.

Suggestions for the Dutch Government to Strengthen its own Performance on Women’s Roles in Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-conflict Reconstruction

Relevant Dutch Ministries such as the Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Social Affairs and Employment could further improve their own policies and practices on the topic of women’s roles in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. The institutional analysis in chapter 8 of part II outlines specific measures that each Ministry could take in this regard.

The Ministry of Defence is strongly encouraged to start addressing the topics of women in peace-support missions and local women in armed conflict in its overall gender policy for 2002-2006. It should provide its new and existing emancipation coordinators and promoters with a concrete mandate, time and incentives to go deeply into these issues. It is of the essence that the Ministry starts thinking about increasing the number of gender-sensitive female, but also male, military
and civilians in peace-support operations. Initiatives in this respect may include gathering more disaggregated gender data about women’s participation in peace-support operations and assessing what characteristics peacekeepers in peace-support operations should preferably have. The findings may be used for selecting gender-sensitive female and male participants, and for gender training that might become a prerequisite for participation in peace-support operations. Current training courses may well pay more attention to the various roles of women in armed conflict. For this purpose, adding a gender specialist to the present training staff and increasing the exchange of information between the training staff and the board of the ‘Defensie Vrouwen Netwerk’ could be considered.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently appointed the Deputy Secretary-General (DSG) as its Gender Coordinator. This positive development requires follow-up in the form of allocating a specific budget and staff, a clear job description, proper delineation of responsibilities with other gender experts within the Ministry, and a review of his functioning after one or two years. The Ministry may well broaden interest for the topic of women in armed conflict. Apart from the temporary specialist located at DSI/VR, the topic has not yet ‘sunk in’ at the other directorates or units dealing with armed conflict, a situation that could be tackled by including the topic in planning, recruitment and appraisal, and internal monitoring and evaluation systems. The Ministry might guarantee that existing gender experts, who are frequently called upon to combine their gender portfolio with other tasks or ‘sectors’, maintain enough time and incentives to deal specifically with the topic of women in armed conflict. The Ministry is furthermore encouraged to clarify to its own staff and outsiders the contents of its policy on women in armed conflict and to present a fairly complete overview of what are seen as its main policy goals and priorities and what activities are carried out in support of these. In this respect, the matrix drafted by the Interdepartmental Working Group on Resolution 1325, which identifies priorities for further implementation of Resolution 1325, could be a useful starting point. The Ministry could also consider how the interaction between the fields of gender and conflict could be intensified, for instance through common inter- and intra-ministerial dialogues, seminars or training sessions.

The Directorate of Coordination Emancipation Policy (DCE) of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment could innovatively contribute to the topic of women’s roles in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. It is important that DCE considers taking a leading role in the development of gender-sensitive budgeting systems, ensuring both the mainstreaming and the visibility of funds for women or gender in the organization’s overall budgets. Moreover, DCE may well become an (inter)national forerunner in the cross-fertilization between policy-makers, developers of tools and instruments, and practitioners in the fields of conflict and gender. Only through more interaction and exchange of information between these two fields will it become possible to address all aspects of the topic of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. The report outlines various concrete options for doing so. Finally, in close cooperation with the organizations under study, DCE is invited to assess the actual impact, \textit{ex ante} and \textit{ex post}, of interventions on the role and position of women in armed conflict. Information, however, is scarce, particularly on the middle-term and long-term impacts.
Part I Women’s Multifaceted Roles in Armed Conflict: Review of Selected Literature
Chapter 1 Introduction

Objectives

Women’s vulnerabilities in times of conflict have long dominated the policy agenda. More recently their positive contributions to the reduction of violence and to peacebuilding have been highlighted, while lately some attention has also been paid to women’s role as protagonists of violence. It now seems the time to reach a more comprehensive, balanced picture of the impact of conflict on both women and men, and of the changing gender relations throughout conflict in both positive and negative terms. Although conflict in relation to gender may refer to both interstate and intrastate conflict, most conflicts nowadays are internal, and internal conflict poses a number of specific and additional problems to women in particular, as elaborated throughout this report.

This review is part of a larger study on strengthening the gender perspective in conflict policy, commissioned to the Conflict Research Unit (CRU) of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations ‘Clingendael’ by the ‘Coordination Emancipation Policy’ Directorate of the Netherlands Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. The study consists of three phases. The first phase comprises a study of relevant literature on the dynamic role and position of ‘local’ women in conflict situations and on the ways in which gender relations are impacted by internal conflict. The second phase examines how a number of selected agencies working in conflict integrate a gender perspective in their policy practice, by looking at, among others, their mandates, structures, policies, operational procedures and policy implementation as well as assessing the available gender expertise. The third phase will suggest means and instruments to strengthen the gender perspective of organizations in order actually to improve the position of women in conflict situations. It will also formulate suggestions and measures as to how the Dutch government could support organizations to strengthen their gender perspective and to improve the Dutch government’s own programmes in this field.

Organization of the Review

This review contains the findings of the first study phase. Chapter 2 describes the policy setting in which the discussion on changing gender relations in conflict situations is situated. Chapter 3 shortly elaborates on the notion of gender analysis. Based on a review of the literature, Chapter 4 proposes an analytical framework that distinguishes seven, different ideal-typical ‘roles’ or positions of women before, during and after conflict. Chapter 5 identifies the challenges in policy and practice that emerge from these seven women’s roles to influence positively gender relations before, during and after conflict. Chapter 6 summarizes the main findings of this review.

Methodology

This review has been prepared largely on the basis of existing written material, including both selected academic sources and documents prepared by relevant (inter)national conflict-related organizations. In studying the material a certain pragmatic selectivity was applied, while keeping
the ultimate policy goal of the study in mind. In particular, the authors have limited themselves to only one area of concern as identified by the Beijing Platform for Action, that is, the area of women and armed conflict\(^2\). We believe that the number of documents reviewed (over sixty sources), as well as the nature and contents of these documents, coincide with this approach.

\(^2\) For the sake of brevity the basic focus of this study, namely ‘women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction’, will be referred to as ‘women in armed conflict’. Whenever the latter is used it should be realized that this encapsulates the activities as mentioned in the longer formulation.
Chapter 2 Policy Background

The interrelationship between gender and conflict has been a topic of discussion for some time now. It was probably the Beijing Conference, ‘the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace’, of 1995 that explicitly brought the issue of gender and internal conflict to international attention. Since then the importance of the theme has been acknowledged by various institutions at global, European and national levels.

International Level

At the international level, the UN has played a leading role in promoting the subject of ‘gender equality in conflict situations’ by organizing the UN World Women Conferences, of which the first took place in Mexico in 1975, followed by a second one in Copenhagen in 1980, a third in Nairobi in 1985 and the fourth in Beijing in 1995.

At the end of the Beijing conference the participants formulated an agenda, identifying twelve critical areas of concern for follow-up, the so-called Beijing Platform for Action (PfA) (Figure 1). The agenda aims at attaining women’s empowerment by national and international commitments for action by governments and the international community, through, among other things, formulating laws, policies, programmes and development priorities.3

For each area of concern a number of strategic objectives has been formulated as well as actions to be taken by governmental, international, intergovernmental, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations respectively.

The Platform identifies 12 critical areas of concern:

1. Women and Poverty
2. Education and Training of Women
3. Women and Health
4. Violence against Women
5. Women and Armed Conflict
6. Women and the Economy
7. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women
8. Women in Power and Decision-making Structures and Processes
9. Human Rights of Women
10. Women and the Media
11. Women and the Environment
12. The Girl Child

Figure 1: Critical Areas of Concern of Beijing Platform for Action

One of these twelve areas of concern was called women and armed conflict. The recommended strategic objectives to be achieved in this regard are summarized in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Strategic Objectives in the field of Women and Armed Conflict, Beijing Platform for Action**

- **a)** Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation
- **b)** Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments
- **c)** Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations
- **d)** Promote women’s contribution to fostering a culture of peace
- **e)** Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women
- **f)** Provide assistance to the women of the colonies and non-self governing bodies.

Accompanying these six strategic objectives is a list of over fifty actions to be taken by different relevant institutions. These recommendations form in fact a very heterogeneous set of measures, varying from general principles of action to detailed, very concrete measures to be implemented at the micro-level. Some actions amount to little more than verbal reaffirmations of existing laws, conventions and principles, while others require the development of specific activities and the generation of funds for their implementation.⁴

Since 1995 the UN, development organizations and member governments have closely monitored the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. In order to assess the overall progress in the five years following the Beijing Conference, the UN General Assembly, in resolution 52/100, decided to convene a special session, the so-called Women 2000, Beijing plus Five session. At this session, entitled ‘Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century’, the General Assembly adopted a Political Declaration and an Outcome Document entitled ‘Further Actions and Initiatives to Implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action’. The Outcome Document indicated, among other things, that there is a wider recognition of the fact that the destructive impact of armed conflict is different for women and men, and hence there is a need to integrate a gender perspective in the planning, design and implementation of development aid and humanitarian assistance. On the other hand, the document also discerned some major obstacles, such as the lack of adequate policy response to the high proportion of female-headed households in internal conflict and the under-representation of women in decision-making positions. Moreover, the personnel dealing with the needs of women in situations of armed conflict were not properly trained in the field of gender.⁵

In the same year, the UN Security Council adopted another resolution (no. 1325) on Women, Peace and Security, reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding. The Council stressed the importance of their equal participation

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and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution.\textsuperscript{6} This resolution is generally regarded as one of the most influential recent documents in setting the policy framework for women and armed conflict.

On 31 May 2000, the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group brought out the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on ‘Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations’. Together with a publication from the Lessons Learned Unit at the United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations, they probably form the most important publications at this moment for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in peace operations, especially in the field.\textsuperscript{7}

In addition, the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs published a series of Briefing Notes on Gender and Disarmament in 2001, elaborating on gender in, among others, programmes for demining, small arms collection, and demobilization and reintegration.\textsuperscript{8}

A second,\textsuperscript{9} major international actor is the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in particular its Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Both the issue of gender and that of violent conflict have been longstanding topics of interest to the OECD/DAC. The OECD/DAC had already established in the 1980s an Expert Group on Women in Development, which in 1998 was renamed the DAC Working Group on Gender Equality, publishing, \textit{inter alia}, two influential publications: the \textit{DAC Guidelines for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Development Cooperation}\textsuperscript{10} and the \textit{DAC Resource Book on Concepts and Approaches linked to Gender Equality}.\textsuperscript{11} These build on the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and also describe how DAC members’ interventions can promote gender equality in situations of conflict.

The Task Force on Conflict published a first set of \textit{DAC Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation} in 1997,\textsuperscript{12} which have been updated and expanded into the publication \textit{Security Issues and Development Cooperation: A Conceptual Framework for Enhancing Policy Coherence}.\textsuperscript{13} Whereas the publication mainly deals with security sector reform, it also elaborates on the interrelationship between gender and conflict by addressing the need for female military

\textsuperscript{5} United Nations General Assembly, 16 November 2000, pp. 7-9., but see also USAID, 2000.
\textsuperscript{7} United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations, 2000.
\textsuperscript{8} United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, 2001.
\textsuperscript{9} In the second phase of this project a third international actor, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), will be analysed on its gender sensitivity and gender expertise, particularly regarding peace enforcement operations.
\textsuperscript{10} OECD/DAC, 1998.
\textsuperscript{11} OECD/DAC, 1998a.
\textsuperscript{12} OECD/DAC, 1997.
\textsuperscript{13} OECD/DAC, 2001.
and police in newly established police and military structures, and the importance of properly addressing gender issues throughout the peace process.\cite{OECD/DAC, 2001, pp. 29-30.}

**European Level**

At the European level\cite{For a useful overview of organizations mainly based in Europe dealing with gender and armed conflict, see the inventory made by International Alert for the Council of Europe, Council of Europe (2001).} various institutions, such as the European Commission, the European Council, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE have put the topic of gender and armed conflict on the policy agenda. The European Council’s resolution of 20 December 1995, for instance, stressed that a gender perspective must be paramount in emergency operations and crisis prevention. The European Council’s Conclusions of 22 November 1996 and those of 18 May 1998 explained how this can be achieved in practice, suggesting, among other things, to train staff of relief and development organizations in gender analysis and encourage the reinforcement of gender focal points within development and relief organizations.\cite{European Parliament, 2000.} The European Parliament’s Report on the Participation of Women in Peaceful Conflict Resolution of 20 October 2000 links gender to conflict situations more explicitly than the foregoing reports, specifically suggesting how to take women’s needs and priorities into account, for instance, through access to formal peace negotiations and the use of demobilization and reconstruction funds.\cite{European Commission, 2000, pp. 13-14.} However, the European Commission’s Communication from the Commission on Conflict Prevention of 11 April 2000 only marginally refers to the interrelationship between gender and conflict,\cite{European Commission, 2000, pp. 13-14.} showing that there is still a long way to go before a gender perspective is fully incorporated in its conflict analyses.

The Council of Europe, through its Steering Committee for the Equality between Women and Men (CDEG), has generated substantial information on various gender issues with the aim to stimulate action at both the Council of Europe’s and the national level. Throughout the 1990s the CDEG published documents under such titles as *Men and Violence against Women*,\cite{Council of Europe, 2001b.} *Domestic Violence*, and *Participation of Women in the Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts*.\cite{Council of Europe, 2001b.} This latter document specifically stressed women’s important role as active players in reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction processes.

Finally, the OSCE is also developing a gender perspective in its conflict-related interventions, supported by, *inter alia*, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1998 a Gender Focal Point was attached to the OSCE secretariat with the responsibility of mainstreaming gender into the work of the Secretariat. In 1999 Switzerland seconded a Gender Adviser to the Secretariat. In 1998, the United Kingdom had already seconded a Gender Adviser to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), with the task of implementing specific gender projects and ensuring that the work of other OSCE units would consider women’s situations and the need

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[15] For a useful overview of organizations mainly based in Europe dealing with gender and armed conflict, see the inventory made by International Alert for the Council of Europe, Council of Europe (2001).
\item[20] Council of Europe, 2001b.
\end{itemize}
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for greater equality between women and men. At present, ODIHR has an official Gender Unit, mandated to deal with the issue of gender for the entire OSCE. ODIHR stresses the necessity for a gender-sensitive approach in OSCE conflict prevention and resolution efforts,\textsuperscript{21} and to address the needs of women in post-conflict issues.\textsuperscript{22}

**Dutch Government Level**

After Beijing, the Netherlands introduced changes to its national emancipation policy, among others, by changing the focus from gender mainstreaming to gender equality. This new emancipation policy increasingly encouraged all the Netherlands ministries, which together are responsible for the implementation of Dutch emancipation policy, to set three practical emancipation goals to be achieved within a Cabinet period of four years, and to be monitored and measured. Each ministry could set its own objectives as long as these would fit the Dutch emancipation policy in general. This evidently caused great variability between the ministries. Out of all Dutch ministries only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has set goals that are somehow related to gender relations in conflict situations, namely to strengthen women’s positions in post-conflict situations in OSCE countries and to safeguard the reproductive rights of refugee women. This is not to say that no other actions are carried out, but that the issue is still underemphasized in formal policy.

\textsuperscript{22} OSCE, 1999, p. 3.
Chapter 3 Approach to Gender

Since there are multiple understandings of gender, this chapter will elaborate on how the topic of women and men in conflict situations is approached in this review paper. Although gender is about women and men, this review will nevertheless particularly highlight the role and position of women in conflict situations. Where possible these will be compared to those of men. This is not to imply that the particular needs of men and men’s suffering in wartime are negated or to infer that women hors de combat suffer more than their male counterparts.23

In most societies, men and women differ in the activities they undertake, in access to and control over resources, and in participation in decision-making. Realizing these differences enhances the awareness of possible inequalities between women and men, which can form a constraint to development because they may limit the ability of men, but more often of women, to develop and exercise their full capabilities, for their own benefit and for that of society as a whole.24

Besides differences in position between women and men, positions and roles among women differ. Although in conflict situations the victim role and the vulnerable positions of women are often emphasized, the multifaceted role of women is increasingly recognized. Women can be mothers, breadwinners, combatants, peace activists, etc., at the same time. Women’s roles are not given by nature, but are negotiable. The underlying notions of femininity and masculinity are negotiated interpretations of what it means to be a man or a woman. Masculinity is often linked to aspects of aggression, militarization, dominance, hierarchy and competition, feeding into the organization of war. Femininity is regularly associated with motherhood, care, non-violence and potential capacities for peace. The interpretations of masculinity and femininity, shaped by the gender culture in which women and men live and by the nature of the conflict, in the end determine male and female actions, behaviour, perceptions, rationality, positions and roles.25

Finally, women are a highly differentiated group of social actors, who possess valuable resources and capacities. While on the one hand women are forced by the conditions of conflict into certain positions and roles, they may on the other hand also deliberately change their positions and roles throughout conflict according to their own agendas and strategies. A case study on Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, shows how women in the pre-war phase mainly tended to identify with nationalism and sectarianism, thus in a sense supporting the conflict. However, during the conflict they came to regard themselves more as victims, because of lack of security, housing and unemployment, and after the conflict many women became more actively involved in the non-governmental sector, working for human rights and peace movements.26

25 See, for instance, Skjelsbaek and Smith, 2001, p. 47.
26 International Alert, 2000, p. 41.
Women as actors actively create room for manoeuvre in conflict situations and utilize the windows of opportunity offered by conflicts to improve their position. For instance, various conflicts offer women new opportunities for political participation, exposure to the concept of women’s rights, the chance to establish women groups, skills training and organizational capacity building.Various studies have shown how women as actors actively utilized these numerous windows of opportunity to improve their position. For this reason, reference is made to an ‘empowerment’ perspective vis-à-vis women’s positions in conflict, in contrast to a ‘victim’ discourse.

27 USAID/CDIE, 2001, p. 35.
Chapter 4 Framework for Analysis

Explaining the Framework

To understand better the multifaceted nature of women’s realities in conflict situations, this chapter presents a framework that analytically distinguishes different ‘roles’ or positions of ‘local’ women before, during and after conflict. The framework is based on an analysis of relevant literature. The literature uses the notions of women’s roles and positions loosely and interchangeably. Some of the literature seems to depart from the idea that social structures and relationships, including those manifested during conflict, largely determine what women do or are able to do in reality. On the other hand, there is some literature in which the negotiated dimension of women’s behaviour and their room for manoeuvre are accentuated and in which the notion of human agency and that of social actor play a predominant role. This study takes the position that women may face serious constraints resulting from the existing social structure and relationships, but that at the same time women always have some room for choice and negotiation. Our usage of the words ‘roles’ and ‘positions’ therefore reflects both the negotiated and dynamic aspects of women’s realities in conflict as well as the operation of structural conditions shaping women’s situations in conflict. The framework discusses women’s multifaceted roles, but we want to stress that these roles should be regarded from a situational and agency perspective, as explained above.

The proposed framework discerns seven major women’s roles in internal conflict: a) women as victims of (sexual) abuse, b) women as combatants, c) women for peace in the non-governmental sector, d) women in formal peace politics, e) women as coping and surviving actors, f) women as household heads, and g) women and (in)formal employment opportunities. It is recognized here that these roles are not ‘isolated empirical realities’, but rather ideal-typical constructs. Women’s situations may in practice combine characteristics of these different roles or partially coincide. Empirical analysis has to indicate which combinations of roles will prevail at a certain place and a certain time and how these are subject to change. In this connection, some observers have called for a so-called time, space and agency perspective. The framework also attempts to link the discerned women’s roles to the pre-conflict, open conflict and post-conflict phase. It is, however, acknowledged that splitting a conflict in three phases is an oversimplification of reality. Case studies have indeed shown that conflict phases neither necessarily follow upon each other time-wise nor that each conflict includes all phases, or that women’s roles are restricted to one single conflict phase. Sometimes the different phases coexist at one particular moment or place. Yet in organizational mandates, institutional responsibilities and budgeting categories, these distinctions still play an important role, unnecessarily hampering the operational flexibility that is required in

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28 These two perspectives are linked to two different sociological traditions, i.e. structural functionalism and actor analysis. In this study we cannot do justice to the further implications of this distinction, also because the literature itself operates from implicit positions in this regard.
the field. To argue for a more comprehensive and flexible approach compared to the prevailing institutional emphasis on the post-conflict phase, these different conflict phases have been included in the framework for analysis as well as in the figure specifying related options for interventions in chapter 5. It has also been suggested that instead of focusing on the different phases of conflict, it may be more useful to concentrate on transitions and on how situations change. Such transitions offer new opportunities and allow actors to undertake new activities. References are also made in this connection to the ongoing debate linking relief and development.

Although the authors of this paper admit that both men and women fulfil these seven roles before, during and after conflict, they nevertheless focus on women dealing with these roles. Firstly, because women tend to perform certain roles in conflict situations significantly more often than men. For example, it is generally acknowledged that more women than men in conflict situations are victims of (sexual) violence, because of women’s special position and roles. Similarly, conflict situations often lead to an increasing number of female-headed households. Secondly, conflicts may open up certain roles for women, which have already been open for men. For instance, more women than men seem to become active in the non-governmental sector, particularly in peace activism. Moreover, partially due to the absence of males in a conflict situation and to the resulting changing division of labour, women increasingly become active as politicians. Thirdly, without explicitly highlighting certain roles of women in conflict situations, women are often overlooked. For instance, the idea of women as combatants is relatively new in policy circles, and without particularly stressing the role of women as female combatants, their needs and interests may not be taken into account. The same counts for women in the informal, but especially the formal employment sector. Their (long-term) interests are liable to be neglected.

**Role 1: Women as Victims of (Sexual) Violence**

It becomes clear when reviewing the literature that most literature focuses on women as victims during conflict. However, detailed information on women as victims in the pre-conflict phase is generally not systematically scrutinized, as this body of anthropological and feminist literature is outside the purview of most policymakers dealing with women and armed conflict. We advise that these fields of literature be linked to the present debate on women and (sexual) violence.

During conflict, it can obviously be assumed that violence against women increases. Whereas during the First World War only 5 per cent of the casualties were civilians, in most contemporary conflicts *civilian casualties* are about 80 per cent, most of them being women and children. Moreover, more women compared to men remain unarmed and unprotected at a time when traditional forms of moral, community and institutional safeguards have disintegrated, and weapons have proliferated, making them particularly vulnerable to all kinds of violations. Since women normally have to bear greater responsibility for their children and elderly relatives than men, they are less mobile to flee eventually from fighting and indiscriminate violence. Forced

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29 ICRC, 2001, p. 43.
displacement may also subject women to violations of their physical integrity and safety. A lack of gender sensitivity in refugee camps, which for instance results in inappropriate sanitary facilities, contributes to women’s exposure to risk and violence.

During conflict, probably the most important sexual threats to women are systematic rape and other forms of sexual abuse against women that have become means of contemporary warfare in themselves. Sexual violence against women appears to be a result of both a general breakdown in law and order and a policy to demoralize the enemy. It is simultaneously a crime against the individual and an act of aggression against the entire community or nation. Women - as symbolic bearers of caste, ethnic or national identity - are systematically violated. From a cultural perspective, the entire community is polluted as a consequence of these acts of sexual violence. The effects for women themselves can range from psychological problems and traumas to social exclusion and even ostracism of the respective women and children born out of this sexual violence.

In the post-conflict phase sexual violence often continues. Findings of the UN Rapporteur on Violence against Women, for instance, reveal a continuum of violence from the public to the private space of homes. As male ex-combatants return home, their traumas and frustrations are often projected onto their wives and families. Moreover, the lack of an effective security system in the post-conflict phase adds to women’s continuous exposure to violence.

Role 2: Women as Combatants

Before the conflict, it seems important to consider women’s motives for becoming combatants. These appear to be as diverse as those of men, including enforced recruitment, agreement with the goals of war, patriotism, religious or ideological motives, and economic necessity, pointing to both political and socioeconomic motives.

Women’s active participation during conflict is thus often their own, free decision. Women actively took part in the hostilities during the Second World War and the Gulf War, in liberation wars, but also in intrastate conflicts, such as in Sri Lanka where one-third of the fighting forces consists of women. In Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Rwanda, women participated in ethnic cleansing. Since it is increasingly difficult to make the distinction between combatants and non-combatants in contemporary conflicts, it seems that an increasing number of civilians, both women and men, actively and voluntarily participate in war activities. Women are also involved in conflict in an indirect way, by supporting their men folk in military operations, and by providing them with the moral and physical support needed to wage war. An anecdote in this regard comes from Che Guevara. In his book on guerrilla warfare, he writes that ‘among the

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31 Byrne, 1996, p. 25.
32 Adapted from AIV, 2001, p. 30.
35 Filkins in Lindsey, 2000, p. 562.
worst things during the Cuban war was the fact that guerrillas were forced to eat the tasteless and sticky food that, in absence of women, they had prepared themselves.\textsuperscript{37}

After conflict, female ex-combatants regularly encounter difficulties while reintegrating into society. Often they are more traumatized than male combatants, because most of them have been subject to sexual violence. They tend to receive less support from their families, because they were often seen as having participated in ‘unsuitable’ activities. When they entered the military, many of them had not finished even their primary education, resulting in a lack of required education after the conflict is over. Out of fear of being mocked and ostracized by relatives or new colleagues, female ex-combatants regularly choose not to share their traumatic conflict experiences. This makes it difficult for organizations to recognize their problems and to address their needs properly.\textsuperscript{38} Particularly worse off are single mothers who, apart from demobilization funds, rarely have other sources of income.

**Role 3: Women for Peace in the Non-Governmental Sector**\textsuperscript{39}

Conflict offers windows of opportunities for women’s emancipation and for the establishment and flourishing of women groups. It gives women the opportunity to enter the public and political areas, where they traditionally had no or only limited access. Their work for peace has been identified as a unique opportunity by many women living in conflict situations to become organized at all levels of society, particularly in the non-governmental sector, which in various countries did not even exist before the conflict.

In the pre-conflict phase it is often the threat of conflict that catalyses peace activism among small and dispersed women’s groups, such as in Bosnia-Herzegovina.\textsuperscript{40} On the other hand, war fatigue also creates opportunities for women’s peace movements, while ongoing conflict also opens space for peace activism, as women whose sons have left to fight or have been lost in conflict, tend to get organized in order to protect their children. Examples include the Russian Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers, which during the Chechnyan war demanded that their sons be sent home, or Yugoslav women protesting for the return of their sons in front of the National Army barracks in 1991.\textsuperscript{41}

During conflict women’s organizations in particular have often assumed the roles and tasks of public institutions. Studies show how women’s organizations were continuing and rebuilding the core institutions of society, often defining their daily life as ‘resisting conflict itself’. Women have tried to keep the memory and idea of a ‘normal situation’ alive through activities, such as

\textsuperscript{36} Lindsey, 2000, p. 563.
\textsuperscript{38} ILO, 1997, p. 128.
\textsuperscript{39} ‘Peace’ activities in this review refer to a very broad range of activities, including charity, channelling aid, psychosocial support, political lobbying, etc. For further reading, see, for example, Kumar, 1997, 2000 and 2001; and Sörensen, 1998.
\textsuperscript{40} Kvinna till Kvinna, 2000, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{41} ICRC, 2001, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{42} NUPI, 2001, pp. 20-21.
opening new health centres, managing day-care facilities, organizing summer camps for children, providing home schooling for children, and distributing food or clothes to elderly people. In Serbia, for instance, women’s organizations took responsibility for caring for refugee women, for the pacifists’ politics, dealing with the worsening of women’s position in Serbia and the hiding of conscientious objectors to and deserters from the army. Moreover, intervening humanitarian and developmental agencies incidentally encouraged women to establish formal and informal women’s organizations to channel international assistance to recipients in need, often other women.

After the conflict, existing and newly established NGOs tend to get involved in a broad range of activities, varying from charity work and the protection of human rights to the design of development projects and the distribution of natural, material and financial resources. Most NGOs have been able to change their activities quickly, reorienting towards newly emerging needs and opportunities. In Georgia, for instance, most NGOs after the conflict started with charity work, but gradually focused on encouraging women to take part in parliamentary elections, strengthening women’s participation in local governance, and transitioning from humanitarian assistance, through self-reliance to development approaches. In Bosnia-Herzegovina women’s organizations, partly under pressure from donors, made a transition from non-commercial projects to those with a potential commercial viability, such as the production of paper bags and toilet paper, and a taxi service.

Role 4: Women in ‘Formal Peace Politics’

Whereas many women in conflict situations have been engaged with ‘informal’ peace activism, only few women have managed to gain access to formal peace politics, which span the entire process of negotiations, often beginning in the midst of conflict, and continuing through the various phases of the transition to peace. Women are typically left out of the official peace negotiations and the formal work for the reconstruction of society, and only a limited number of women have managed to participate in peace talks and in signing peace accords.

An important question that has to be answered first is why women’s (increased) political participation is desired. From a ‘gender equity’ point of view the short answer is that women and men have equal rights and chances on political participation. From a ‘utility’ point of view the quantitative argument is that human resources in times of conflict are scarce, and thus both male and female politicians are urgently needed. The qualitative argument is that female politicians (can) make a positive difference in conflict management, conflict resolution, peace negotiations and peacebuilding. Several studies have shown that female politicians often introduce other experiences with conflict, set other priorities for peacebuilding and rehabilitation, are the sole

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43 Kumar, 2000, p.25.  
45 Kumar, 2000, p. 31.  
46 Kumar, 2001, p. 150.  
47 Kumar, 2001, p. 170.  
48 Naraghi-Anderlini, 2000, p. 4.
voices speaking out for women’s rights and concerns, manage to form coalitions bridging deep political, ethnic and religious divides on the basis of women’s shared interests, are regarded as less threatening to the established order, thus having more freedom of action, and bring a better understanding of social justice and existing gender inequality to peace negotiations\(^{50}\). Women’s participation in the actual peace talks can also foster a wider popular mandate for peace, making it more sustainable. And finally, women’s involvement at the peace table has already yielded some concre	extit{e results}. These include, among others, more equal access to land and credit, separate units for women’s issues within newly established ministries, equal rights to vote and changed attitudes to women’s leadership and decision-making capacities.\(^{51}\) The question nevertheless remains of how women are then involved in the formal, political (peace) process before, during and after conflict?

It is difficult to describe women’s political participation in the pre-conflict phase, because there is almost no literature on this topic. More studies are surely needed about women’s political roles in the period before a violent conflict erupts. On the one hand, women’s access to political life at all levels of society on the one hand may increase during conflict, because of a decrease in stereotypical gender divisions of labour, the absence of males and women’s frustrations with male politicians. On the other hand, the existing traditional structures are often still too strong in the early phases of conflict to encourage women’s political participation. Moreover, in various conflict situations there is hardly any representative government or parliament in which women could be politically active.

At the end of conflict, relatively few women manage to get involved in the formal, national peace negotiations. These negotiations tend to remain male, high-level activities, in which women are typically underrepresented in the involved international authorities, in negotiation teams representing the warring parties, and in any other institution invited to the negotiation table.\(^{52}\) Reasons for this, inter alia, are that only parties to the conflict tend to be involved in peace negotiations, and that traditional international law and diplomacy with its emphasis on the abstract entity of the state\(^{53}\) is insensitive to gender concerns. For instance, in the Dayton Peace Accords for Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Rambouillet Agreement for Kosovo, women were underrepresented, resulting in a lack of gender sensitivity in the final accords and their consequent implementation.\(^{54}\) More positive examples come, for instance, from Burundi, where UNIFEM and international agencies helped women to participate in the Arusha peace process.\(^{55}\)

In West Africa (Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia) women from various countries formed the Mano River Women’s Peace Network to engender the peace process, among other things, by making presentations to the Heads of State emphasizing the importance of involving women in

\(^{49}\) Kvinna till Kvinna, 2000, p. 11.
\(^{50}\) Naraghi-Anderlini, 2000, p. 6.
\(^{51}\) Naraghi-Anderlini, 2000, pp. 39-42.
\(^{52}\) Sörensen, 1998, p. 9; Byrne, 1996.
\(^{53}\) Byrne, 1996, p. 28.
\(^{55}\) UNIFEM, 2001, pp. 2-3.
the attainment of durable peace in the region. More recently, women were also represented at the peace talks on Afghanistan in Bonn, among others, by Ms Sima Samar, who is currently the Minister of ‘Women’s Affairs’ and Vice-President in the interim government of Afghanistan.

In the post-conflict phase, it is a well-known fact that women who have been politically active during conflict encounter difficulties in politics after the conflict. There is obviously no immediate connection between women’s political agency in the actual conflict phase and their participation in the political decision-making processes at the national level in the post-conflict phase. In various cases, women had to retreat from public and political life once the hostilities ceased. Reasons for this tendency include the reintroduction of the traditional social and political order existing before the conflict, war fatigue that grips some women leaders, or men seeking to reassert their authority. On the other hand, the presence of numerous international organizations in the post-conflict phase offers women various (new) opportunities to get politically involved. Various examples (see Annexe A) illustrate how intervening agencies helped women to become involved in the implementation of the peace accords, enabling them to incorporate specific women’s needs and interests. They also supported women to participate in post-conflict elections and politics, and in drafting new legislation (or even a new constitution), which is particularly important, because the lack of recognition of women’s rights in a new constitution will have a long-term impact on their recovery and options for development.

**Role 5: Women as Coping and Surviving Actors**

Women use coping mechanisms, which enable them to survive in times of crises. They operate as capable and knowledgeable actors that, even under the most extreme circumstances, have the capacity to process social experiences and develop ways of coping with life.

A first coping or survival mechanism that women might display is to make adaptations to their existing roles and activities within their immediate environment. They often have to cope simultaneously with a breakdown in basic services such as health and school systems, and decreasing availability of and access to resources such as food and water, but also to information and support networks. Consequently, women may have to walk over increasing distances to collect water, as was the case in Kosovo, provide health care to ill, old and wounded family and community members under circumstances of increasing communicable diseases and higher risks of epidemics, and, in the absence of schools, to provide childcare and home-schooling to their children, limiting their time to carry out other tasks and eventually to earn an income.

A second coping mechanism is migration. It is estimated that 80 per cent of internally displaced persons and refugees are women. Migration often involves numerous disadvantages, such as

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56 Femmes Africa Solidarité, 2000, p. 7.
57 Karame, in Council of Europe, 2001b, p. 51.
58 Naraghi-Anderlini, 2000, p. 22.
59 Kumar, 2000, p. 15.
61 Byrne, 1996.
separation from sources of income such as land and family, departure from community networks for protection and support, adapting to a new lifestyle, building up new skills and expertise to generate income, and complicating daily activities such as collecting firewood, cooking, and medical care. However, it could be observed that many women have shown a remarkable resilience in adapting to these new surroundings and livelihoods. In fact, some studies indicate that they fare better in their new environments than men, who tend to be lost and disoriented without their usual employment and public roles to play. Women, in contrast, experience a level of continuity in their household chores, while relying on familiar forms of informal networking.

Thirdly, women take over tasks previously carried out by men, as will be illustrated under role 6: ‘women as household heads’.

A fourth coping mechanism used by women in conflicts is to take up activities that are not only new but may be socially unacceptable, such as working outside home, petty crime, illegal trade or engagement in prostitution, which, due to the absence of other sources of income and the concentration of potential clients such as male combatants or international peacekeepers, becomes a viable method of income-generation. These latter forms of coping are correctly categorized as ‘distress coping mechanisms’.

It is hard to link specific coping mechanisms to the pre-conflict, actual conflict or post-conflict phase. However, women tend to continue their ‘normal’ life as long as possible. As conflict and its consequences continue, they increasingly have to adopt coping mechanisms, starting with relatively simple forms of coping but gradually tending to forms of distress coping. Once the conflict is declining, women are among the first to contribute to rehabilitation efforts, often particularly paying attention to the rehabilitation of effective health and education services, in order to take up their normal daily activities again.

Role 6: Women as Household Heads

Conflict can completely change the role of women in their family, the community and in the ‘public’ domain. It regularly forces women to become household heads and breadwinners, taking over the responsibility for earning a livelihood, caring for farms and animals, trading and being active outside the home – activities traditionally carried out by men. Particular attention is required for specific groups of women, such as female-headed households and widows, because they are likely to be poorer as they often have to carry all the household responsibilities alone.

The literature on women as household heads before conflict has not been scrutinized in the sources studied for this literature review. Most studies focus on the actual conflict phase, in which a relatively large number of women become household heads, taking up alternative livelihood activities for which they are under-equipped and untrained. They lack access to wage labour, as

63 See, for example, Jiggins in Frerks, 2000; and Meertens in Moser and Clark, 2001, pp. 133-149.
65 Kumar, 2000, p. ix.
they can no longer count on traditional work groups, which are dismantled due to displacement, divorce or death. They are often taken away from their traditional environment, exposing them to larger risks. Women also encounter difficulties in accessing relevant training programmes, which can provide them with the expertise and knowledge to take up their new tasks. However, the most common obstacle is their limited land and property rights. Private or communal land may simply not be accessible because it is destroyed by combatants as a means of warfare or because mines have made it too dangerous to enter. However the major cause is that under most systems of customary law, women are prohibited from owning, renting or inheriting land, property and housing in their own names, and that access to and control over these rests completely with male relatives. On a more positive note, it has been observed that during conflict, traditional systems and the traditional division of tasks break down and that women are regularly granted access to land to ensure their own survival and that of their family. Yet access to land and property does not give the same title and safeguard as ownership.

After conflict, husbands and male relatives return home and are often inclined to restore the traditional divisions of tasks and roles. They take over activities outside the home, which during conflict were undertaken by women. When men also start generating income anew, women are increasingly forced to take up their role in the household again. The restoration of traditional divisions of tasks and (inheritance) systems in the post-conflict phase particularly has a negative impact on female-headed households and widows. Whereas they may have been allowed access to land and property during conflict, this may change after conflict. In many societies, women’s legally recognized rights to inherit land from deceased male relatives are lacking or ignored. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, women returnees and widows in particular were disadvantaged by gender-blind domestic laws and property rights, in which men are considered the primary owners of land.

**Role 7: Women and (In)formal Employment Opportunities**

In conflict situations, women often become the only remaining breadwinners, because their men and sons are either involved in fighting or have been killed, displaced or wounded. Some men remain (temporarily) away in search of income and employment. Others are ashamed to return home not being able to provide for their families, sometimes feeling so much guilt that they even tend to shun income-generating or employment activities and retraining opportunities, as was for instance the case with men in Georgia.

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69 ICRC, 2001, p. 94.
70 ICRC, 2001, p. 94.
72 Kvinna till Kvinna, 2000, p. 43.
73 Access to (in)formal employment is obviously not only a matter of gender. Byrne, for instance, shows how ethnicity plays an important role in Kosovo in gaining access to employment, showing that 70 per cent of the employed Albanians had been dismissed from their jobs at the beginning of the conflict (Byrne, 1996, p. 36).
74 Kumar, 2001, p. 152.
**Informal Employment**
Because of prevailing social-cultural norms and socioeconomic situations, women are often less inclined to look for income-generating activities outside the home before conflict, because (their) men take care of this. Obviously, this differs per conflict situation.

During conflict, however, many women are forced to accept badly remunerated work in the informal sector, which tends to expand rapidly in conflict situations as formal structures cease to function. In former Yugoslavia, women became the main travellers and traders between the different regions, since it was easier for them to cross borders. Because of women’s increased mobility and because they are perceived as less threatening, a spontaneous kind of women’s market of information and services appeared, including networks for transferring money and goods, exchanging homes, providing jobs and medicaments, etc.\(^{75}\)

In the post-conflict situation women also mainly find employment in the informal sector, because this sector resumes almost immediately, whereas investments in formal and larger enterprises are delayed as investors wait for political stability before they become active. After the conflict in Georgia, for instance, internally displaced women became increasingly involved in small-scale trading in markets and bazaars throughout the country.\(^{76}\)

**Formal Employment**
In contrast to informal employment opportunities, it is hard to assess whether conflict broadens or limits women’s chances of formal employment. Basic data on women in formal employment positions in the pre-conflict phase are not reported in the analysed literature.

On the one hand, state collapse, the closure of private companies and so on may lead to a general loss of employment during conflict. On the other hand, the loosening of traditional labour relations and the increase in war-related sectors, such as arms manufacture and trade, may broaden women’s involvement in the formal employment sector. Detailed information, however, is again lacking.

Regarding the post-conflict phase, some studies indicate that where combatants returned to civilian life during the early phases of post-conflict transition, female workers in the organized sector, regardless of their education,\(^{77}\) were generally first to lose their jobs.\(^{78}\) However, other studies state that in some countries the post-conflict need for human resource development was apparently so strong that women were encouraged to take up employment even when it contradicted existing gender roles. Although the post-conflict phase may provide an opening to build on the progress made by women in the labour market during conflict, the recurrence of traditional divisions of labour tends to limit women’s chances for (formal) employment again. For instance, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, labour laws do not protect women’s full and equal access to

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\(^{75}\) Slapsak in Skjelsbaek and Smith, 2001, p. 181.
\(^{76}\) Kumar, 2001, p. 153.
\(^{77}\) Sörensen, 1998, p. 36.
\(^{78}\) Kumar, 2000, p. ix.
employment, while women’s wages are sometimes only half of their male counterparts and problems regarding maternity leave allowance and forced early retirement have been encountered in most parts of the country, specifically frustrating those women that became the sole providers of income after the conflict. Some of these impediments are the result of neo-liberal economic policies imposed by the IMF and World Bank.

**Summarizing Women’s Seven Major Roles**

As shown in the first column of Figure 3, the framework described in this chapter has discerned seven major roles of women in conflict situations. Depending on each conflict phase (pre-conflict, actual conflict and post-conflict), each role exhibits some major characteristics. These are shown in column 2. Since the reviewed literature tends to focus on the actual conflict phase and on the post-conflict phase in particular, the description of the main characteristics per role in the pre-conflict phase is somehow limited. Finally, the list of considerations presented here is obviously not comprehensive, but is meant as merely indicative. Other topics that are not described here may also be relevant.

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<tr>
<th>‘Role’</th>
<th>Characteristics of Women’s Roles in the Phase of:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-Conflict</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Actual Conflict</td>
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<td>Post-Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women as Victims of (Sexual) Violence</td>
<td>● Increasing number of civilian casualties</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Increased exposure to violence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Sexual abuse as systematic method of warfare</td>
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<td>Women as Combatants</td>
<td>● Direct involvement in fighting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Indirect support of conflict</td>
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<td>Women for Peace in the Non-Governmental Sector</td>
<td>● Anti-conflict campaigns</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Taking over public roles</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Maintaining the ‘normal situation’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Providing Relief and Humanitarian Assistance</td>
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<td>Women in ‘Formal Peace Politics’</td>
<td>● Limited access to political life</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Increasing access to political positions at various levels of society</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Limited access to formal peace process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women as Coping and Surviving Actors</td>
<td>● Hard to maintain political position</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Participation in rewriting laws and constitution; post-conflict elections; and rehabilitation efforts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women as Household Heads</td>
<td>● Minimum of survival mechanisms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Use of coping mechanisms; adapting existing roles; migration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Sub-optimal results and forms of distress coping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women and (In)formal Employment</td>
<td>● Change to more sustainable ways of living</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Difficulties maintaining activities outside the home</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Continuing struggle for access to land and property</td>
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<td>● Increasing informal sector employment</td>
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<td>● Limited formal sector employment</td>
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<td>● Continuing informal sector employment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Recurrence of traditional division of labour</td>
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Figure 3: Women's Multifaceted 'Roles' in Conflict Situations
Chapter 5 Challenges in Policy and Practice

This chapter addresses two groups of women: women who are professionals in conflict management; and ‘local’ women who are affected by the conflict every day. These groups play different, but complementary, roles in conflict situations. Their relationship is not unidirectional, but interactive. Therefore both groups of women should participate in conflict-related interventions in order to improve ‘local’ women’s position in conflict situations. This chapter will argue that in order to address the seven roles of ‘local’ women in conflict situations better, as discerned in chapter 4, intervening agencies must a) employ more women as professionals in conflict management, b) adapt their interventions to the needs of ‘local’ women in conflict, and c) consider implementing concrete options for intervention, as suggested in the third part of this chapter.

Women, Conflict Management and Peacekeeping

The main elements of conflict management are preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. Whereas it is increasingly acknowledged that the participation of ‘women as professionals’ in conflict management is of paramount importance for the development of a war-torn society, women until now have largely been excluded from military and civilian roles in this field. Intervening agencies should therefore continue to promote the increase of women in all elements and levels of conflict management, not only because gender mainstreaming in conflict management is only fair, but in the end also beneficial to ‘local’ women living in conflict situations. For instance, various studies support the employment of women as political staff, civilian police observers, sanction monitors and humanitarian personnel in Multidimensional Peace Operations. They state that women’s presence in peace operations improves access and support for local women, particularly for medical and psychological treatment; it makes male peacekeepers more reflective and responsible, it broadens the repertoire of skills and styles within the mission, often reducing conflict and confrontation; it results in lower rates of complaints from the local population, improper use of force, or inappropriate use of weapons; and it simultaneously contributes to a reduction of prostitution among local women and a better protection of peacekeepers against HIV/AIDS.

Gender-Sensitizing Interventions to ‘Local’ Women in Conflict Situations

A first issue here is that intervening agencies should gender-sensitize their policies in order to support ‘local’ women in improving their situation. Quick-impact projects that address women’s direct needs must simultaneously take place with activities that contribute to women’s social, economic and political empowerment in the long term. Gender-sensitizing policies require a thorough gender analysis that clarifies the interrelationship between gender, the specific conflict

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81 See, for example, Ogunsanya and Mngqibisa, 2000; and International Alert, 2001.
situation and the potential different impact of external interventions on women and men. And it demands the promotion of gender equality, because without a clear focus on gender equality, intervening agencies will most likely fail to capitalize on opportunities to ameliorate the negative conditions that women endure in conflict and perpetuate disparities between women and men. Intervening agencies could also increasingly conflict-sensitize their interventions. It is of the essence to develop instruments and methodologies that combine gender and conflict analysis. Whereas agencies either gender-sensitize or conflict-sensitize ‘standard’ policy-planning methods such as impact and needs assessments, they do not simultaneously sensitize them to both gender and conflict. Also in the more academic field, little attention has been paid until now to gender-sensitizing specific conflict tools and instruments, such as early-warning systems or peace and conflict impact assessment methodologies.  

A second point is that most intervening agencies start addressing women’s needs and interests in the post-conflict phase, and not already in the pre-conflict phase. Hence, numerous women in conflict situations suffer unnecessarily. More disaggregated gender data on the pre-conflict phase need to be gathered in order to facilitate proactive and preventive interventions in conflict situations, which limit women’s exposure to violence and insecurity.

Lastly, there are numerous practical possibilities for intervening agencies to address women’s needs and interests in conflicts better. Firstly, women often face important obstacles in gaining access to those who provide help. Intervening agencies could attempt to overcome obstacles such as security problems, childcare needs, lack of resources, limited mobility and freedom of movement, etc. Secondly, intervening agencies should take into account the specific capacities and vulnerabilities of particular groups of women, such as refugee women, displaced women, female hostages, female ex-combatants, widows and female-headed households. Thirdly, intervening agencies must recognize women as actors and anticipate women’s changing roles, positions and identities in conflict situations. They must shift from welfare-oriented projects that aim to reduce the women’s suffering here and now, to projects that support women’s own long-term strategic interests. For example, during the rehabilitation process in Rwanda, ‘women’s committees’, elected in ‘women-only elections’, were established at the level of government administration in order to encourage women to express themselves freely. The government had given these committees the authority to set up communal funds for women to help start economic activities at the community and sector level, thus allowing women at grassroots to participate in funding decisions affecting their lives.

83 The Swiss Peace Foundation in collaboration with International Alert is currently developing a framework for gender-sensitive early-warning models, aiming at both women’s and men’s participation in local early-warning committees.
86 Sörensen, 1998, p. 66
87 International Alert, 1999, p. 45.
These practical efforts will only be successful when intervening agencies not only ‘add women to projects and programmes’, but truly incorporate women in the institutional process to ensure that their visions, interests and needs are reflected in the definition of policies and strategies.

Options for Interventions related to ‘Local’ Women’s Roles Before, During and After Conflict

It is of the utmost importance that intervening agencies through ‘multi-track diplomacy’ concretely deal with ‘local’ women’s needs and interests in all aspects and levels of conflict situations. Whereas the options for interventions are numerous, those mentioned here below are explicitly related to the seven major roles of women before, during and after conflict as discerned in chapter 4. Each women’s role can be addressed by different options for intervention, where certain interventions may impact on more than one women’s role at the same time. A summary of the interrelationship between the seven major women’s roles and the options for intervention in the pre-conflict, actual conflict and post-conflict phase is shown in Figure 4 at the end of this chapter.

Maximize Women’s Security throughout Conflict

A pertinent issue is to prevent women from an increased exposure to insecurity and violence. This requires enhancing women’s physical security, including material security such as food, water, housing, etc., and protection from violence.

Since prevention is better than cure, intervening agencies need to develop effective early-warning and response processes to prevent gender-based violence. Women could be involved in early-warning processes by collecting information, analysing the conflict, assessing the risks, and developing adequate responses. It is assumed that with the active participation of women, early-warning systems better utilize the untapped potentials of women’s networks and organizations, and facilitate potential conflict responses at a political and humanitarian level to address the specific vulnerabilities of women and men alike.88

During conflict it is not always easy to protect women from insecure and violent situations. However, even when safety measures are available, they are not always implemented. For instance, agencies still fail to employ female security officers in patrolling camps or to build sanitary facilities in appropriate locations so as to minimize women’s exposure to violence in refugee camps.89

Also after the hostilities have ceased, women continue to need protection. The presence of demobilized soldiers and unemployed militias, and the lack of rules and sanctioning mechanisms, often lead to a serious threat for women in both the public domain and the domestic sphere.

Women Restoring Civilians’ Security

Programmes before, during and after conflict to restore civilian security, such as security sector reforms, greater representation of women in police forces and judicial processes, training security staff and international peacekeepers about women’s issues, de-mining and the non-proliferation of small arms programmes, form a unique opportunity to render the prevailing security actors and systems more gender-sensitive. Women, who have often experienced the negative consequences of women-unfriendly security systems, may very well be able to improve the systems, if they are actively involved in their planning, set-up and implementation.

Regarding the post-conflict phase, a good example of a conscious gender-sensitive effort in this regard comes from a Police School in Kosovo run by the OSCE. The planners deliberately planned to recruit women for the new Kosovo police force. Some 20 per cent of all newly recruited personnel must be female. An example of women’s contribution to de-mining programmes is Cambodia, where women tended to set different priorities for mine clearance and mine awareness education programmes. In small arms programmes in Mali, women acted as ‘watchwomen’ that reported about illicit arms transfers among community members and influenced their children’s decisions not to take up weapons. In Albania, UNIFEM (UN Development Fund for Women), in close collaboration with UNDP and the Albanian government, has also been very successful in promoting women’s active role in the disarmament process of the population through a voluntary Weapons Collection and Destruction Programme.

Trauma Counselling
Trauma counselling, particularly during and after conflict, is important because conflict often traumatizes both women and men. Many people living in conflict situations argue that their trauma is not over with the last bullet, indicating the need for continuing assistance to traumatized victims of conflict well into the post-conflict trajectory, by including, for example, counselling and psycho-social rehabilitation projects. In various post-conflict situations victims show typical signs of trauma: depression, psychological disabilities, chronic fatigue and recurrent recollections of traumatic incidents. Several studies have pointed to differences between women and men in the ways in which they deal with trauma.

Truth Processes and National Reconciliation
In the post-conflict phase, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have substantially contributed to processing women’s and men’s negative conflict experiences, but they have tended to omit specific considerations of violence against women or have handled these considerations in an ineffective manner. This practice can be changed. For example, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa has, sometimes to the obvious detriment of women, only modestly

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90 See, among others, Kumar, 2000, p. 52.
92 UN Department for Disarmament Affairs, 2001, Briefing Note 5.
93 See, for example, Mansaray, 2000.
94 UNIFEM, 2001, p. 3.
95 Kvinna till Kvinna, 2000, p. 40.
96 Kumar, 2000, p. viii.
utilized several practical opportunities to incorporate a gender perspective, such as considering women’s specific needs and interests in the formulation of reparations and rehabilitation policies, the equal (in)material compensation of women and men for the human rights violations committed against them, and sensitively treating issues such as rape and other forms of sexual violence.⁹⁹

**Tribunals and Legal Advice**

Also in the post-conflict phase, the work of war tribunals and associated legal advisers needs to keep gender issues in mind, especially when addressing the violations committed against women. A special approach is required to assist women to speak up about their traumatic conflict experiences, often related to sexual violence and abuse. Special legal and social support structures need to be established, which are geared to women in order to aid their reporting and the prosecuting of perpetrators of war crimes and human rights abuses against them.¹⁰⁰

**Disengage Women from Conflict**

Since in contemporary conflicts an increasing number of women actively and voluntarily participate in war activities, the challenge for intervening agencies is to disengage women from all phases of conflict, by continuously providing a safe space for non-war action and a safe voice for non-war ideas.¹⁰¹ Particularly regarding female combatants, intervening agencies could develop activities to prevent women from entering the military, for instance by creating alternative sources of income besides the military, raising awareness about the negative consequences of actively joining the army, and discussing other means than fighting to prevent or resolve conflicts.

**Reintegration of Female ex-Combatants**

Whereas intervening agencies should already attempt to support female combatants while they are in active service, they should pay particular attention to them in demobilization and reintegration programmes in the post-conflict phase. Female ex-combatants often cannot participate in these programmes, because they are tied to their homes and families, or because these programmes tend to be based on the so-called trade-in concept, which means handing in weapons in exchange for assistance, and thus tending to overlook (female) ex-combatants without guns or other weapons that fulfil support roles. Therefore intervening agencies could, *inter alia*, explicitly target women in demobilization and reintegration programmes, ascertain what skills and education women have managed to obtain while in the military and, if needed, offer different forms and levels of training to female and male combatants, address specific female soldiers’ physical needs, establish support groups of female soldiers that have been in similar positions in order to share traumatic experiences, and assist female soldiers in gaining access to property after they have returned home.

**Create Sustainable Women’s Organizations**

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¹⁰⁰ Pankhurst, 1999, p. 32.
The earlier that intervening agencies start supporting women’s organizations, the more chance they have that these organizations will play an important and positive peace role in conflict situations. Studies have shown that strong women’s civil society organizations, dating from before the conflict, have cultivated skills and broadened opportunities for women to gain entry to the peace process and to occupy various public and political positions. In all conflict phases, they should support the formation and strengthening of (new) women’s organizations, the articulation of women’s groups’ agendas, and women candidates for public and political functions. In addition, they should assist women’s organizations to overcome obstacles and limitations such as lack of status in the eyes of male counterparts, a disabling conflict environment and internal management and leadership problems, and they should provide training in the field of management, leadership, lobbying and advocacy, legal issues and other relevant topics.

However, it is not enough only to support women’s organizations on an ad hoc or short-term basis. A long-term commitment from intervening agencies is required to render women’s organizations sustainable. Once the conflict is over, the level of international funding and humanitarian assistance usually declines fairly rapidly. In order to promote sustainability, intervening agencies could help women’s organizations to change mandates, goals and activities, and to explore the possibilities for their own income-generating activities. Moreover, they could recruit these women’s organizations in their assistance programmes related to health, income generation, social work, democracy and human rights and advocacy. In such a way, women’s organizations could increasingly be involved like other NGOs in larger-scale development initiatives in the long term.

**Promote Women’s Formal Political Participation**

Women’s role as active players in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction processes is of paramount importance for the development of society. Therefore, increasing the number of women in decision-making at all levels of society remains a major task. Intervening agencies must ensure that women get involved in conflict prevention and resolution initiatives, peacekeeping programmes, peace negotiation processes, post-conflict elections, rewriting laws and the constitution, and the planning and implementation of reconstruction efforts.

On a practical level, intervening agencies could train ‘local’ female politicians. The sooner that they receive training, the more chance they have to reach decision-making positions. Most women have had little political experience or training in the pre-conflict phase, but during conflict most of them gain some experience in political activities related to warfare or

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102 Naraghi-Anderlini, 2000, p. 12.
104 Kumar, 2000, pp. 48-55.
105 Kumar, 2000, p. 56.
106 Council of Europe, 2001b, pp. 57-69.
peacemaking. Women in political positions after the conflict are thus especially in need of training to compensate for the lack of broader political experience, and to increase their knowledge on a range of political topics that are pertinent under non-conflict situations.

While acknowledging that it remains important to look at the specific job requirements and women’s capacity to match those, quota systems that ensure a minimum participation of female politicians can have their benefits as well. Quota systems should preferably be combined with public awareness campaigns, networking between political women, education and training.

**Helping Women Survive Conflict**

The options for intervening agencies to help women to survive conflict are well known and effectively put in practice. Numerous activities have been undertaken by humanitarian agencies to provide women with food and water, shelter and clothes, health-care and training on actual health issues, assistance to maintain and restore their networks with family and relatives, clean and safe sanitation facilities in refugee camps and so on. The overall lesson learned is probably that targeting women’s direct needs does not go automatically, but that each time women’s specific circumstances and priorities need to be specifically assessed again, and anticipated and acted upon.

**Provision of (non-)Physical Assets**

The main challenge to help women that have become the main breadwinners in the course of conflict would be to provide them with sufficient productive assets in order to ensure their survival. The provision of productive assets in both cases not only covers physical assets such as tools and seeds, but also needs to include technical skills and knowledge. Practical ways of increasing the access to productive assets may encompass the provision of food, seeds, pesticides, agricultural tools and livestock, the funding of micro-credit programmes, for instance to stimulate private sector development in remote areas and with neglected groups, and the restoration of communal assets and improving people’s access to them. Projects in this connection are mine-clearing, cleaning the environment, and constructing and repairing roads, houses or bridges. In addition, the provision of resources to a community may present an opportunity to initiate a process of rebuilding trust and reciprocity in the post-conflict phase.

**Legal Assistance and Land Reform**

Especially in the post-conflict phase, female-headed households, widows and other women need the support of intervening agencies for legal reforms to enable them to inherit and own productive assets, especially land. Women’s rights to land and other property could be realized by land reforms, and by ensuring that property rights, ownership and entitlements by women are enshrined in constitutional and statutory laws, which are an important defence against practices

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109 Although this option would be particularly effective in certain African conflict situations, it can in principle be applied to other parts of the world as well.
110 Date-Bah, 1998, p. 43.
111 See, for example, Baden, 1997; Kumar, 2000.
that marginalize women and deprive them of sustenance and the means of livelihood. Examples from the field show that women are in need of support and legal advice. In Bosnia-Herzegovina the Centre for Legal Assistance for Women, for example, provided legal aid free of charge in the field of property, housing and labour rights to women, mainly refugees and returnees, self-supporting women and women soldiers.

**Enhance Women's (Formal) Employment Opportunities**

Intervening agencies, mainly in the post-conflict phase, should simultaneously address women’s direct needs for employment and income generation, and their long-term interests in the labour market. To anticipate these direct employment needs, they could provide training and employment programmes in various fields such as agriculture and the urban formal sector, which at the same time strengthens local institutions such as women’s organizations and labour unions. There should be explicit avoidance of women again receiving training in gender-stereotyped micro-business promotion, such as sewing and knitting, because this only contributes to the oversaturation on the market of gender-stereotyped goods, to insufficient income, and to a lack of local input and ownership. Intervening agencies could also introduce quick-impact micro-business schemes that help women to buy land, property or other assets to rehabilitate their sources of income. In order to ensure the sustainable impact of micro-credit programmes, these should be combined where possible with larger economic assistance schemes that promote equal economic opportunities for both women and men.

To change structurally and improve the work of women, intervening agencies must find ways to combat the recurrence of traditional divisions of labour after the hostilities have ceased, support women in maintaining the jobs they employed during conflict, and facilitate women’s employment in ‘non-traditional’ sectors and skills. Finally, recognizing that labour markets differ among countries and that women’s chances of formal employment under certain circumstances can be relatively low, they may assess to what extent they can also contribute to the improvement of basic employment issues, which include gender-sensitizing labour and other relevant laws, raising awareness among employers and state officials to improve women’s access to employment, downsizing gender-stereotypical labour roles, decreasing discrimination and sexual harassment on the work floor, length of working days, opportunities for part-time labour, equalling salaries between women and men, aiming for women’s rights and protection in jobs, ensuring childcare facilities and maternal/parental leave and so on. In this connection, the potentially contra-productive effects of World Bank and IMF requirements and regulations should be taken into account.

**Summarizing Options for Intervention linked to Women’s Roles**

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114 Kvinn till Kvinn, 2000, p. 43.
115 Kumar, 2000, p. 34.
117 USAID/CDIE, 2001, p. 36.
118 See, for example, Loutfi, 2001.
This chapter shows that there are concrete options for intervening agencies to address women’s needs before, during and after conflict. Each of the options for intervention is linked to one of the seven major roles of women as summarized in Figure 4. The list of options for intervention presented in this chapter is indicative of the major issues, but could be adapted according to the needs and characteristics of the local situation. Since the reviewed literature tends to focus on possibilities for intervention in the post-conflict phase, the suggested options for interventions that can be applied in the pre-conflict and actual conflict phase are somewhat limited. More studies and relevant data would be welcome.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Role’</th>
<th>Related Options for Intervention:</th>
<th>Actual Conflict</th>
<th>Post-Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women as Victims of (Sexual) Violence</td>
<td>• Women’s active participation in, for example, early-warning systems</td>
<td>• Practical safety measures, for instance in refugee camps • Trauma counselling</td>
<td>• Reducing domestic violence • Involve women in security sector reform, de-mining, small arms, and DDR programmes • Trauma counselling • Truth and reconciliation • Persecution of perpetrators, for example for crimes of rape and sexual abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women as Combatants</td>
<td>• Support non-war activities • Awareness-raising among potential female combatants</td>
<td>• Support non-war activities • Start addressing specific needs of female combatants</td>
<td>• Support non-war activities • Gender-sensitise demobilization and reintegration programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women for Peace in the Non-Governmental Sector</td>
<td>• Support establishment of women’s organizations • Train women activists and women’s organizations</td>
<td>• Support women’s organizations • Train women activists and women’s organizations</td>
<td>• Make women’s organizations sustainable • Train women activists and women’s organizations • Redirect goals, priorities and sources of income towards women’s organizations • Long-term financial commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in ‘Formal Peace Politics’</td>
<td>• Encourage women’s participation in preventive diplomacy, through, for example, training and quota systems</td>
<td>• Encourage women’s participation in peacekeeping and peace negotiation processes, through, for example, training and quota systems</td>
<td>• Encourage women’s participation in post-conflict elections, drafting constitutions, rehabilitation efforts, etc., through, for example, training and quota systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women as Coping and Surviving Actors</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Actively involve women in humanitarian assistance</td>
<td>• Actively involve women in humanitarian assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women as Household Heads</td>
<td>• Provision of assets, skills and information • Micro-credit schemes</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provision of assets, skills and information • Micro-credit schemes • Legal assistance and legal reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and (In)formal Employment</td>
<td>• Micro-credit schemes</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Non-traditional vocational training and employment programmes • Micro-credit schemes • Structurally improve women’s employment possibilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: The Interrelationship between Women’s Roles in Conflict and Options for Interventions Before, During and After Conflict
Chapter 6 Conclusions

The area of gender and internal conflict has recently been extensively highlighted in (inter)national policy documents, providing numerous guidelines and principles to improve the position of local women in conflict-related situations. The policies are thus in place. What is now required is performance. Intervening agencies should now start directing attention and resources at the implementation and institutionalization of a gender perspective in concrete conflict analyses and policies.

In order to incorporate local women’s needs and interests in conflict-related interventions, it is important to approach local women in a realistic way. Women’s positions, roles and activities in conflict obviously differ from those of men. But there are also differences among women, in the way that they fulfil a multifaceted role: they can be mothers, breadwinners and combatants, etc., at the same time. It is increasingly acknowledged, still more in the literature than in actual policies, that intervening agencies should not regard women as passive victims of conflict, but social actors who can strategically change their different positions and roles in order to anticipate conflict and to utilize optimally the windows of opportunity offered by conflict. Differences among women are not only related to their multiple gender roles and positions as analysed in this study, but also obviously reflect the issues of ethnicity, religion, social class, etc. The influence of these should be taken into account in conflict-related interventions, but goes beyond the topic of this study.

This review presents a framework to guide intervening agencies in the analysis of the multifaceted role of women in conflict-related situations and in the formulation of pertinent policies, addressing these roles. The seven major roles of women in the pre-conflict, actual conflict and post-conflict phase discerned are: women as victims of (sexual) abuse, women as combatants, women for peace in the non-governmental sector, women in formal peace politics, women as coping and surviving actors, women as household heads, and women and (in)formal employment opportunities. Intervening agencies must see this framework in a dynamic way, realizing that women’s roles, gender identities and relationships constantly change in conflict situations.

To respond to these seven roles of women in conflict, this review has discerned three major challenges for intervening agencies in policy and practice. The first challenge is to employ more ‘women as professionals’ in conflict-related interventions such as preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacebuilding, and post-conflict rehabilitation, because this is beneficial to local women who are affected by the conflict every day. Various studies have shown how the incorporation of ‘women as professionals’, *inter alia*, has improved local women’s access to conflict-related interventions and how local women benefit from these interventions.

The second challenge is to adapt conflict-related interventions increasingly to the interests and needs of local women in conflict. Intervening agencies should simultaneously apply a conflict and
gender analysis in order to gain insight into the constantly changing roles of women in conflict, to assess whether conflict policies and interventions affect women and men differently, and if so to explore what then can be done to prevent or correct women’s or men’s disadvantage. They could openly promote gender equality in order not to perpetuate inequalities between women and men in conflict situations. Moreover, it is important that intervening agencies, and academics as well, gather more disaggregated gender data on the pre-conflict phase in order to facilitate proactive and preventive interventions in conflict situations, which limit women’s exposure to violence and insecurity. Intervening agencies still mainly tend to focus on women’s roles in the post-conflict phase, leading to unnecessary suffering of women before and during conflict. Lastly, intervening agencies should ensure that they, through actively involving local women in the design and implementation of conflict-related interventions, support women’s long-term strategic interests.

The third challenge for intervening agencies is to anticipate the seven major roles of women concretely in their policies and interventions, mitigating the negative impact of conflict on women and at the same time supporting and sustaining women’s newly acquired public and political positions, and their organizations. This review has outlined a number of options for such interventions in the pre-conflict, actual conflict, and post-conflict phase. The suggested options are meant as indicative and can be further complemented over time.

The overall challenge that now remains is to integrate the suggestions and options mentioned in the review paper into conflict policies, translating them into operational guidelines and procedures, and to stimulate intervening agencies in conflict situations to make their concrete field activities more conflict- and gender-sensitive.