



Gender in the Civil Peace Service

Gender equality and female empowerment

The term 'gender' describes the social construction of maleness/femaleness as distinct from the biological characteristics that are denoted by the term 'sex'. Gender relates to the distinctions society makes between males and females in such areas as sex-specific role behaviour, socially constructed stereotypes and the relationship between men and women and is, therefore, also an indicator of power relationships and discrimination. The historical and culturally governed allocation of male/female roles and the perception of these roles that evolves during socialisation determine the interests, needs and rights of men and women.

Background

Taken in conjunction with other factors, such as social and economic status, ethnic identity and age, assigning an individual to a specific gender determines and constrains how he or she participates in society. In patriarchal societies, women in particular have few, if any, rights to participate in political, economic and social processes and decisions. Such discriminatory structures often begin in childhood, with girls not being allowed to attend school or being forced to marry at a very young age. This structural discrimination against women means that two thirds of worldwide poverty is now 'female' poverty. Gender is, therefore, a crucial factor in the global reduction of poverty. The UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 called for respect for equal rights in all social fields, structures and processes. This call was adopted under the heading of 'gender mainstreaming' and complements strategies to promote women. The Millennium Development Goal 'Promote gender equality and empower women' (MDG 3) translates these aims into a specific target at national and international level.

In addition to structural discrimination, women are often the victims of physical violence resulting from patriarchal structures and gender perceptions; this violence is widely accepted as 'normal' and, therefore, not brought to justice.

The gender dimension of this direct form of violence is usually exacerbated in the context of violent conflict. During such conflicts, sexual violence is used systematically as an instrument of punishment, a means of repression and a war tactic: sexual violence against women is aimed at destroying their personal integrity and at demolishing social structures in the long term, with rapists demeaning their female victims, pouring scorn on their husbands, sons or fathers as 'inadequate' men who were unable to protect 'their' women, and thereby undermining cohesion among their opponents. This also applies to the rape of men in war situations. The military structures that dominate in conflict situations socialise young men in particular to narrow standards of aggressive and possessive masculinity, with the result that sexual violence is particularly common as an instrument of power over women even after conflicts have ended. Conflicts involving violence also have a major impact on perceptions of the roles of men and women in society, and the re-imposition of old role models once a conflict is over often leads to a rise in violence against women in both the public and the private sphere.

UN Resolution 1325, adopted by the Security Council in 2000, therefore calls for women to play an active and equal part in conflict resolution measures, for such measures to have a gender-specific impact, and for women to enjoy special protection in conflict situations. This requires specific measures against sexual violence in armed conflicts and gender mainstreaming in all peace building and consolidation measures.

CPS target groups and partners

To achieve equality, the CPS cooperates with partner organisations working in the area of gender relations. It uses its financial and human resources tools to promote women as actors in the peace process. The explicit aim is to support women not as victims but as individuals and as a group who, as actors within social structures, take on a

powerful, equal role that corresponds to their specific needs. As well as working with women directly affected by violence, CPS-supported projects also target these women's immediate social environment, including men. The target group further includes actors at local level as well as multipliers and actors with social influence who work in conflict transformation, including those at state level. The aim is to move beyond individual support to develop social processes with a wider impact.

What the CPS does

The CPS works before, during and after conflicts to draw attention to violent behaviour and social structures dominated by violence, to dismantle them, and to replace them with long-term alternatives. Its objective is to work both on gender relationships as a conflictual power structure and on the impact of gender-specific violence. Moreover, gender is integrated in all CPS structures and processes as a cross-cutting theme and is accounted for in planning, monitoring and evaluation processes. The standard aimed at by all CPS measures is that they achieve equal participation by men and women and are tailored to their different needs. Moreover, all experts are given explicit training in gender issues before travelling abroad: peace experts in partner countries are particularly important as role models in peace building and have a responsibility both to develop gender sensitivity and to act in accordance with it in everything they do.

The CPS also works explicitly on improving equality in its partner countries, and peace experts cooperate with partner organisations to empower women at the following levels as social players with their own specific needs:

- As actors in the **reconciliation process** (for example, in rebuilding communities).

In the justice arena, the CPS promotes partner organisation projects that increase women's access to the legal system. This supports the **judicial resolution of violations of women's human rights** in the context of civil war and armed repression. Women are also supported in protecting and asserting their rights in current violations of their human rights.

- To **tackle discrimination against women in conflict contexts** with the aim of promoting critical awareness and identifying alternatives.
- In the context of **peace education**, young people are targeted for sensitisation to the rights of women and girls with the aim of changing behaviour in the long term. Projects tackle role models, the asymmetric relationship between men and women, human rights, and women's and girls' rights using concrete examples and develop appropriate curricula.
- Support is provided for **media projects** to boost the sensitisation of society to the diverse needs and rights of women and men, in particular in conflict situations and in the peace process. Peace experts train participants in conflict- and gender-sensitive reporting and the methods used in peace journalism and support the development of media models and the production of radio programmes.
- Women with direct experience of sexual violence are supported by self-help groups to **come to terms psychologically and socially** with the trauma they have undergone and its impact. This work promotes action to tackle existing role concepts through group work (women-only and mixed groups) on the links between gender and violence, including the role of machismo and masculinity in society.

The CPS approach to boosting gender equality and, explicitly, to improving the situation of women and girls is always a holistic one: the work of CPS experts in partner countries not only involves those directly affected but also aims to integrate all actors at local, regional, and national levels.



Afghanistan

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After more than thirty years of civil war and ongoing military conflict, Afghanistan's political, social and economic structures are extensively damaged. High levels of political frustration and increasing poverty are depriving the population of hope for a better future. After decades of war, young men's behaviour is marked by a high potential for violence, while women are excluded from the political consensus-building process and are substantially under-represented in public spaces, particularly in peace building measures. Women experience structural violence at the level of the justice system, within the education system, and through culturally-rooted traditions, such as forced marriage and child marriage. Many are also the victims of direct physical and, especially, sexual violence within their families. However, because family violence is considered a private matter, women suffer this abuse with no opportunity for legal redress.

In addition to taking a gender-sensitive approach to all development measures, the CPS targets partner organisations that are explicitly committed to implementing three goals: (1) empowering women and girls to assert and exercise their rights, (2) promoting the participation of women in peace building measures, and (3) significantly reducing violent crime as a result of action through the justice and security system.

To do this, the CPS cooperates with a partner organisation, the *Afghan Women's Educational Centre* (AWEC), which works in many provinces in Afghanistan to secure women's and children's rights in the family and in society. There is a high level of illiteracy among Afghan women, so the materials AWEC uses rely extensively on images, posters, comics and film. A CPS peace expert supports the work by providing training in methods and models for civil conflict resolution and peace building and by advising on the further development of training provision and teaching and training materials.

In cooperation with its partner organisation, *Mediothek Kunduz*, the CPS is raising awareness of the need for women's participation, in particular in peace building processes. Activities including the 2008 nationwide *Women's Peace Caravan*, whose impact extended to the Presidential Palace, are used to raise awareness of the increasing marginalisation and disempowerment of women and to underline their role as social actors. Another organisation, *Mediothek Kabul*, also receives support and advice from a CPS expert in setting up a body called *Women in the Media*.

As well as promoting further local projects, the CPS also works with state agencies to promote gender equality. Peace experts work within Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission for better awareness and recognition of the special needs of women and girls. They support approaches to strengthening the protection of human rights and train various groups of employees at different functional levels in non-violent conflict resolution. They include security officers in rural areas, police trainers within the Ministry of Interior Affairs, social workers from the Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development, and agents of civil society.

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Guatemala

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36 years of armed conflict between guerrillas and the state security forces in Guatemala claimed more than 200,000 victims of political assassination, abduction, massacre and other major human rights violations. 90% of these victims belonged to the country's indigenous population. Sexual violence against women, mass rape and sexual slavery were used by the state as instruments of torture and as a military strategy to permanently destroy social structures and suppress the armed uprising. Inadequate prosecution of these crimes, impunity from justice, a lack of compensation and growing poverty mean that violence remains an everyday reality in Guatemala despite the Peace Accord signed in 1996. The relationship between men and women and the perception of their respective roles are dominated by machismo, with the result that women now face substantial difficulty in accessing decision-making fora, while sexual violence against them is prevalent and socially accepted. The threat of stigmatisation and exclusion from their families and communities forces women to remain silent about their experiences of violence and deters them from seeking medical and legal assistance.

The CPS approach to the post-conflict situation in Guatemala is to seek men's and women's participation on an equal footing in all measures and to raise employees' awareness of the need for equality. Indicators of its success in achieving this are built into the impact evaluation of all projects. All peace experts and partner organisations are supported in implementing gender equality measures by an expert from the GIZ Development Service.

Beyond this general emphasis in all measures on improving gender equality, peace experts also cooperate with a range of partner organisations to work directly with women who have been affected by violence. They collaborate, for example, with the NGO *Equipo de Estudios Comunitarios y Acción Psicosocial* (ECAP) to support survivors of sexual violence in working with other victims to deal with their experiences in a context of psychosocial support. The starting point is a discussion in a safe location, which encourages social dialogue, promotes cohesion at local community level, and boosts women's participation through networking. There is a parallel dialogue around the role of

men and of masculinity in the relationship between men and women as well as in social power structures in general. With the objective of strengthening women's rights and recognition of women in their immediate social environment, peace experts work to raise awareness among families and local communities of the problem of sexual violence and its impact, engaging in face-to-face dialogue as well as supporting wide-reaching publicity campaigns.

Further CPS measures are aimed at boosting local capacity for non-violent conflict resolution. Peace experts support the development of spaces for dialogue and deploy methods of non-violent conflict resolution. The focus here is on the participation of both men and women, on tackling existing perceptions of their roles, and on recognising the rights of women. A priority is to support women in gaining access to land and asserting their rights to own land.

Cooperation with NGOs is supplemented by support for the Guatemalan Government's human rights office, *Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos*. The CPS has promoted awareness-raising measures around role perceptions and women's rights. It has supported women – in particular those from the indigenous population – in asserting their rights in family and social conflicts, land disputes and in seeking compensation for the injustice they suffered during the civil war.

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Rwanda

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Since the end of the colonial period, Rwanda's history has been one of decade-long, violent conflict between the Hutus and the Tutsis, groups that are interpreted in ethnic terms. In 1994, this conflict culminated in the genocide against the Tutsi population in which more than a million people lost their lives. Since the genocide, the Government of Rwanda has been resolute in its action against any hint of (ethnic) division in Rwandan society. This state-mandated unity is, however, undermined by the fact that there has been no justice for the victims of genocide and there is no plan for confronting the country's violent past. For example, dealing with the crimes against victims of sexual violence is of prime importance, because if the perpetrators of these crimes are not brought to justice, the women involved are not recognised as survivors of violence, a situation that takes a continued toll on their mental and physical health. The stigmatisation of women who have contracted HIV/AIDS or became pregnant as a result of rape is a particular challenge.

The measures implemented by the CPS take the affliction of women who have survived sexual violence as their starting point. In cooperation with the human rights organisation *Kanyarwanda*, CPS peace experts work with women suffering the long-term effects of traumatisation, stigmatisation and physical injury. For example, the CPS has supported the *CARVITORE* programme, which provides psychosocial support for genocide survivors and particularly for women and orphans in remote rural areas. Peace experts have set up self-help groups to enable those affected to deal with their experiences of trauma and have supported psychological counselling. Women are being empowered to value themselves as capable of taking action and asserting their rights. They write plays and films in which they are able to portray and act out their own stories, recounting the daily challenges they face to have their child recognised, for example, or their efforts to avoid him or her being stigmatised as a 'rape child'. Through *AVEGA*, an organisation for widows, the CPS also contributes to the process of reconciliation. On request, victims and perpetrators are prepared for a face-to-face meeting and supported during it. The meeting and the opportunity to talk gives both sides the opportunity to understand one

another better and can help to promote the individual process of healing. These two organisations provide safe spaces for such meetings but also champion women's concerns in public with a view to combating discrimination, supporting individual healing and achieving social recognition of the physical and mental suffering that violence brings.

Empowering women and girls as social actors is also the aim of cooperation with the *Maison des Jeunes Kimisagara (MJK)*, a peace building skills centre in the Great Lakes region of Rwanda. Young women take responsibility for public events held as part of the cooperation project: *Forum-Theater* and *Football for Peace* are two formats that offer a light-hearted way to address subjects such as violence, power and the relationships between men and women. The MJK team's main concern is to involve both men and women in all activities on an equal footing. The peer educators within MJK member organisations work regularly with their groups on the subjects of HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and gender-specific violence. Gender topics are also targeted in various projects. With the support of the CPS expert, the peace media project *HEZA* regularly produces radio programmes with a gender focus (for example, on discrimination against women in the award of land titles, on the impact of the Rwandan Government's policy of promoting women, or on the effects of taboos related to homosexuality). As part of the project, young journalists of both sexes focus particularly on conflict-sensitive reporting. *Football for Peace* is a further powerful tool for promoting equality between girls and boys: all the teams consist of three girls and three boys, but only the girls are allowed to score goals.

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