MICRO CON

A MICRO LEVEL ANALYSIS
OF VIOLENT CONFLICT

What Can Applying a Gender Lens Contribute to Conflict Studies?
A review of selected MICROCON working papers

MICROCON

What Can Applying a Gender Lens Contribute to Conflict Studies?
A review of selected MICROCON[1] working papers[2]

Colette Harris[3]

MICROCON Research Working Paper 41

Abstract: It is rare to find gender a specific focus of scholarship on conflict studies. In MICROCON we have tried to place gender in a central position within all projects and to convince all researchers to use a gender lens for their analysis. This paper uses a set of MICROCON working papers to illustrate how gender can be used at different conceptual levels in conflict analysis, and aims to show what can be gained by the use of a gender lens. The papers bear out Enloe's insistence that those seeking an in-depth understanding of the social and political world require a feminist curiosity − that is, a curiosity about the roles gender categories play in political debate and action, as well as in scholarship.

---

[1] MICROCON is an EU-funded multi-country, multi-institution programme encompassing a wide variety of individual projects that study the effects of conflict at the micro-level. As the person responsible for gender issues in the programme, it has fallen to me to provide an overview of the ways in which gender has been incorporated into project publications. The present paper is my contribution to this.

Full text versions of all the MICROCON working papers already published referred to in this paper can be freely downloaded from the MICROCON website at: http://www.microconflict.eu/publications/publications.html.

[2] My thanks to Kathleen Jennings and others for their comments on the paper.

[3] School of International Development, University of East Anglia. Email: colette.harris@uea.ac.uk.

Introduction

It is rare to find gender a specific focus of scholarship on conflict studies except when produced by scholars who, like myself, habitually use a gender analytical lens. This is presumably because for a large number of researchers working on conflict, gender is seen as either an irrelevance or a minority issue. This no doubt stems in great part from the unfortunate conflation of women and gender in a world in which females and their affairs continue to be seriously undervalued, particularly those from the global south (Wright 2006). However, it perhaps also arises from an (unarticulated and probably unconscious) fear of what a well-aimed view through a gender analytical lens might expose both of men and masculinities and of the internal workings of global power relations.

This is unfortunate since, as Cynthia Enloe has repeatedly demonstrated, gender is fundamental to politics and as she and other scholars have further shown, it is inseparable from conflict, from decisions taken in the White House and the Pentagon (Cohn 1993) on down to the grass-roots level of individuals deciding whether or not to participate in riots or civil wars.

Enloe recommends all scholars cultivate 'a feminist curiosity' - that is, a curiosity about the roles gender categories play in political debate and action, as well as in scholarship. To neglect this, she suggests, produces a distorted image of the world and leaves us blind to what is occurring beneath the surface (Enloe 2007). Looked at through such a lens, nationalism, militarism, industrialisation, climate change, the global problem of waste disposal, and other apparently neutral issues are all shown in fact to be strongly gendered (Enloe 1989, 2000, 2007; Hollway 1989).

This is why from the start, in MICROCON we have tried to place gender in a central position within all the projects it encompasses and have endeavoured to convince all project researchers not merely to disaggregate their data by sex but also to use a gender lens for their analyses.

The MICROCON Gender Framework

This document contains an explanation of how gender can be understood and used at multiple different conceptual levels. The most straightforward of these and the first level I deal with in

this present paper simply incorporates sex-disaggregated data and discusses the results with little, if any, attempt to engage with gender theory. For obvious reasons this is an approach most used by economists and others carrying out statistical analysis.

The second level is the use of gender as a proxy for women, particularly in issues related to women's rights and needs. Writing at this level too tends to pay little attention to gender theory. However, it will often seek to incorporate these issues within a policy framework and therefore is particularly useful for those seeking material for policy briefs or similar.

At the third conceptual level, gender addresses different ways in which men's and women's identities and the roles they play shape what they do and how they are conceptualised and treated in social relationships in their particular settings. When the setting is a conflict zone, intra- and inter-household relations are likely to be an important focus, including conflict-related issues such as domestic violence. This allows us to make careful studies of what actually happens on the ground and why. This conceptual level includes both what is conventionally termed gender scholarship, that very often tends to focus mainly on women, as well as masculinity studies - that is, the study of men as gendered beings. In all of these, identity plays a crucial role, although there are wide distinctions between the depth of theorising and the disciplinary approaches of the different scholars involved.

It should be noted here that in regard to identities, age plays a particularly crucial role in those many parts of the global south where the social structures are gerontocratically organised - that is, in which age plays a significant role in power relations, including gendered ones. The result is that here age intersects with sex to produce fundamental distinctions between gender identities of men and women of different age groups, since power relations are of course fundamental to gender relations both between and among the members of each sex (see Harris 2004).

At the fourth and highest conceptual level gender is shown to play a significant role in world politics and a gender lens shone here can provide extraordinary clarity on little known corners where light of this kind has until recently almost never penetrated. There is now, however, a

growing body of work mainly by feminist political scientists, of whom Enloe is one of the most prominent.[4]

Overview of this paper

In order to answer the question I posed in the title to this paper, I propose to use MICROCON working papers to address each of the above conceptual levels in turn to show what can be gained by the use of a gender lens.

To this end I have chosen a selection of what on the face of it are quite disparate papers written from distinct disciplinary, ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives, using a variety of approaches to data-analysis and focusing on conflicts at different levels and on different continents.

I believe the obligation of an academic is to support the endeavours of the most marginalised and discriminated against to improve their well-being, and this paper will demonstrate how much can be gained in this direction by the use of a gender-analytical lens. Answering the question posed in the title will allow me to show the crucial role of gender analysis in grasping the power relations underlying the socio-political settings dealt with in these papers. Again, I must stress that this is as much about the implications of gender in the wider political discourse as about gender differentiated treatment and behaviour of individuals on the ground.

In the next section I explain the concept of gender as I will use it in this paper, while the subsequent sections deal in turn with the four conceptual levels outlined above.

What do we mean by gender anyway?

This is never an easy question to answer and here it is particularly complicated since at each of my four levels, gender appears to have a different and perhaps even mutually exclusive, meaning. How can one word hold so many distinct connotations? This is because of the very different philosophical and conceptual approaches I outline above. In other words, gender as used in the writing of different MICROCON scholars closely resembles the elephant in the story of the blind men, each of whom had hold of a different part of it. Gender has a distinct

---

[4] See also the work of Carol Cohn, Kimberley Hutchings, Jenny Pearce, and Melissa Wright – to list only those whom I cite elsewhere in this paper (see bibliography).

but important function at all four conceptual levels but what each level contributes to scholarship is very different.

At the first level, that of sex-disaggregated data, in effect what one learns is that men and women may exhibit significant statistical variance. I suggest that this is a little like the tip of a protruding iceberg. It provides an often tantalising indication of a great deal more buried beneath the surface that would repay the trouble of searching it out. It lets us know that men and women really do have different life experiences, even if these have been sanitised into groups of nice neat (supposedly value-neutral and objective) figures. This is the only level that habitually deals with quantitative data. Almost all scholarship at the other levels is qualitatively based.

At the second level of a proxy for women, we learn something about issues as they pertain to women. We study women's contributions, often in order to do so completely separating them from those of men or of the mainstream, and focusing purely on female institutions.

It is at the third level of gender as role and identity that we start to find a degree of conceptual complexity. Here we enter the realm of interdisciplinarity - of sociology, anthropology, political science, psychology, law, religious, conflict, and development studies and many more – any, or all, of which may be drawn upon in the attempt to elucidate and make sense of the world (see e.g. Harris forthcoming; Moore 2007). It is at this level that attempts to define gender start to take on levels of complexity too.

Definitions acceptable at the first two levels might be as simple as the old war horse emanating from the early years of second wave of feminism that gender signifies socially constructed differentials between males and females, as opposed to sexed bodies, which here are seen as fixed and biologically immutable (Esplen and Jolly 2006). However, by the third and fourth levels we have reached a point where even bodies are conceptually structured and do not merely exist in two discrete and opposing flavours (Stoltenberg 2000), where gender is part of politics and surface behaviour may (deliberately?) reflect something very different from internal self-experience (Harris 2004). Here men have moved beyond Wittig's ungendered norm (Butler 1990) to form as much a segment in gendered categories as women and where young men may be only marginally more empowered than their sisters or brides and similarly forced to obey their elders, including their mothers (Harris 2004).

At this level a discussion of gender in terms of identities or norms is common. This has multiple implications, starting from who has the power to determine the sex of new-born babies (Butler 1997: 49, 51) and continuing with the concept of gender being inculcated from birth through repeated admonitions to behave in a manner appropriate to one's sex within the socio-cultural group concerned (Butler 1990; Harris 2004). In other words, gender is associated with early childhood development and hence deep psychological processes (Silverman 1992). Despite this, many of the characteristics that comprise the particular sets of gender norms of a specific social group can be verbally articulated and discussed, meaning that they are available to the consciousness.

Gender is both embedded in the psyche and enacted. It is not enough simply to internalise it - the whole point is to project it to others. This suggests that people have a certain level of choice over how they do this, albeit it highly constrained, the main limitation being the extent of social condemnation likely to result from transgression of the norms (Harris 2004).

When asked to deconstruct their own particular group's gender norms – that is, the norms of femininity and masculinity within that group – people are generally able to think of these in terms of sets of distinct characteristics for each sex, thus opening up the black box of gender and enabling us to deal with each of these traits individually. In most of the many different parts of the world in which I have asked people to do this, among the chief traits attributed to men have been breadwinning, control over family members and decision-making, bravery and protection of one's own. Those allotted to women are complementary – homemakers and child raisers, obedience and submission, fear and weakness.

Such strong similarities among groups from distinct socio-cultural backgrounds in vastly different countries and on multiple continents[5] should be taken neither as an indication of biological determinism nor of universal values but rather as a mark of the far and deep reach of the influence of western culture via (neo)colonialism, coupled with the significant proportion of the world's population that has been converted to one of the two main proselytising religions – Christianity and Islam. Religion has a great deal of influence on

---

[5] I have carried out this exercise in various parts of North and South America, Central, South and South-East Asia, East and West Africa, with groups as disparate as scientists holding PhDs, students, government workers, NGO staff, urban youth and illiterate villagers.

gender ideals, as the global clash between Islam and the west has clearly shown (Harris forthcoming).

With our fourth conceptual level we move into a realm of global politics where we are no longer focussing on individual human beings but rather on how gendered human experience has been distilled into political rhetoric in such a way as to obscure its origins and naturalise it. This is where an oppositional binary of masculinities and femininities that places a series of positives on the former in contradistinction to a complementary series of negatives attributed to the latter becomes translated into a masculinist vocabulary available for use as a shorthand way of describing the world that pretends that gender has nothing to do with it (Hutchings 2008). An example is the way we privilege so-called objectivity and 'hard science' over subjectivity and 'soft science', generally without consideration of the political, power-laden implications.

At both the upper two conceptual levels, gender is seen as something concealed behind an invisible fence of hegemonic power according to Gramsci's original sense of the word – that is, hegemonic in the sense of what Marx termed the manifestation in ideology of the material power of the elites (Marx 1972) in such a way as to render it invisible to the lower classes through naturalisation (Gramsci 1971). However, while gender and development theory and practice have long at least made an attempt to deconstruct and hence reveal gender identities as being created through socio-political relations of power, the same can hardly be claimed for masculinism.

This appears to be one of the last and most fiercely guarded strongholds of globalising capitalist hegemonic power. It is at this level that questions around the relationship of gender and military weaponry (including weapons of mass destruction) can be asked (Cohn and Ruddick 2004). It is also at this level that the state and supra-state institutions, including market economics, connect with sexuality and the actual behaviour of sexed human beings (Harris 2011).

Gender and sex-disaggregated data

This section focuses on Calderón and Ibáñez's study of the impact on the urban labour force of conflict-related forced rural-urban migration in Colombia (2009). The data shows male immigrants to have skills sets with low correspondence to the needs of urban labour markets

and thus to make it particularly difficult for this segment of the population to earn a living. The result is that their immigration has a relatively small impact upon the urban male population, especially as most of them work in formal employment, to which the incomers have virtually no access. The difference between the skill sets of the incoming females and their urban counterparts, however, is much slighter, presumably because they all work largely in fields related to the tasks they perform in their domestic capacities. The result is that the two groups compete for income opportunities and so immigration drives down the level of compensation urban women receive for their labour. The female workforce congregates largely in informal labour processes so the women compete not so much for formal positions as for niches in, for instance petty trading in local street markets.

This study suggests an important topic for future research on the region might be the impact of all this on the immigrant men. Given that masculine identity is heavily dependent on breadwinning and that men who take on women's domestic and/or childrearing tasks tend to be mocked at and seen as emasculated, the likelihood is that these men are not supporting their families by filling in for their wives at home even when the main burden of financial support falls on the women's shoulders. Moreover, the lack of meaningful occupation for the men concerned could usefully be studied to see how far it results in increased violence at domestic or community level or both, as well as whether it is responsible for increasing rates of marital breakup, as has happened elsewhere in similar situations.

Gender as a proxy for women

This kind of writing centres on explorations of different aspects of women's particular positioning in current societal relationships, accompanied by little or no theoretical problematising around gender identities and/or power relations. For this section I will draw on two papers, the second of which treats women as victims, while the first shows women as activists, both typical positions for writing at this level. The first is Benoit Challand's paper on the Israeli-Palestine Conflict (2010). While the focus of this paper is on EU aid and its use by civil-society organisations, what I will deal with here is the discussion around women's organisations.

The article suggests that women's activism is of major importance in the peace movement. Women's organisations work particularly hard and have their own strategies aimed at mitigating some of the worst effects of the occupation. Women are involved in both formal

and community-level organisations, the first mainly working to diminish the impact of the occupation, the second to transform the situation by trying to get Israelis to face up to the realities of the effects of the occupation and to reduce prejudice against Palestinians. Feminist organisations are in the vanguard of the peace movement and particularly focus on women's position and gender relations, bringing together women from both sides of the conflict. These organisations work in practical ways as well, for instance, by defending the rights of Palestinians through the Israeli law courts. Women's organisations also fight alongside others to support claims to better treatment on behalf of the Arab minority living in Israel as well as of Arabs in the occupied territories. Despite strong taboos they have even been able to raise the issue of the militarisation of the Israeli state.

Thus, without being the major focus of this paper, these organisations are identified as gender specific and shown to occupy a significant position in civil-society activism in the Israel/Palestine conflict. Women are thereby portrayed as playing particularly important roles in this, with feminist groups in the forefront. They are depicted as being so active at different levels of civil society, that the writer found it essential to differentiate women's organisations from those run by groups the identity of whose members remains unspecified. There is no suggestion that there is also a group of men's organisations that play a comparable role,[6] nor any questioning as to why women play such a strong role in the peace movement. Nevertheless, the article makes it clear how very important this is, thereby suggesting where the EU might best place its largesse in order to have the biggest possible impact, which is after all the whole point of this paper.

The second paper I discuss here is Fred Kindi's offering (2010) on the land rights of Acholi women in northern Uganda after the end of the civil war (1986-2006). This paper is part of MICROCON's gender workpackage and therefore gender is its central focus. The paper sets out the obstacles that women face in claiming land rights in a patrilineal, patrilocal cultural setting where they are not seen as full members of their birth clans and so do not have full rights to their land; since they never become full members of their husbands' clans they are not granted legal rights over that land either. This is a structure that historically worked well

---

[6] Nor is the question raised of why there should be women's organisations and not men's. A gender perspective might have led the author to consider this point. However, it is rare even for gender specialists to ask this kind of question.

at a practical level as long as marriage was for life and men supported their wives economically. The problem is that the destruction of traditional lifestyles by the war and the devastation wrought by AIDS have produced an unprecedented number of widows and orphans with no proper claim to land, who find themselves destitute in a setting with few income-generating opportunities outside farming. The issue of land rights has become one of the most intractable obstacles to successful post-conflict reintegration (*cf.* Bjørkhaug *et al* 2007) and the rights of women and their children are a very significant element of this.

The paper addresses the cultural, political and economic obstacles that keep women and very often their male offspring too from obtaining land rights. It focuses to a certain extent on the gender identity issues that form the bulk of the cultural opposition to allotting women full land rights. However, its main arguments are framed in terms of policy, of the responsibility of the government and the international community to help women gain their rights. It does this to the point that it contains specific policy recommendations that can easily be adopted by the international community or others working on related issues.

Gender and identity

This level encompasses a very wide range of conceptual approaches from those that do not engage with gender theory at all to those placing it at the centre of attention. What they all have in common is the fact that they treat gender as having direct bearing on interpersonal relationships because of its effect on human identity.

In this section I have included a number of MICROCON papers covering a similarly wide range of engagement with different epistemological approaches to gender theory. I end with a series of papers of my own on the northern Uganda conflict that use gender theory at multiple levels, from mere sex-disaggregated data to explanatory of behavioural patterns, attitudes, and practices suggesting that meaningful social transformation may depend on making changes at the level of gender identities for both men and women. Before that I explore the importance of taking masculinities into account in studying religious extremism through two papers on Muslim radicalisation in Europe, and consider the role of gender and identity in the differential treatment of men and women in the conflict in Mogadishu over the last few years. I start by looking at a quite different kind of conflict – over water usage.

Lecoutere, d'Exelle, and van Campenhout (2010) studies competition over scarce water resources in Tanzania and discusses the reasons for the observed behaviour of members of different socio-cultural groupings in relation to water and water conflicts in terms of both political ecology and identity. The paper suggests that members of the most disadvantaged groups are currently the most conflictive in circumstances of scarcity and therefore have the greatest potential to engage in violent conflict in the future, even though this has not happened to date.

Intersecting with age, gender is shown to be highly influential in influencing water-usage related behaviour in this gerontocratic society. Men generally exhibit selfish behaviour in regard to water usage but are not particularly conflictive. Women are likely to be cooperative around water usage as long as they are not faced with serious shortages but when they are this pushes them to engage in conflictive behaviour more easily than men, probably because of their greater dependence on water for domestic as well as agricultural use, since women are responsible for household water provision.

Power adheres to older men, excluding younger men and women. Members of certain minority groups – in particular religious and ethnic minorities – are particularly at a disadvantage both culturally and economically. The most marginalised groups *and women* are said to be at the highest risk of engaging in violent conflict over water resources.

This paper considers identity, and especially gender identity as a crucial factor in gauging the propensity of individuals within a particular water management zone to enter into conflictive behaviour. What it does not do is to go further and consider what kinds of conflicts the different gender groups are most likely to engage in.

The paper differentiates between the attitudes and behaviour of women, and older and younger men. It could usefully form the basis of a further analysis of the kinds of conflict each group might be most willing to engage in and the level of violence they might employ. Most important is to consider if the apparent strong willingness of women to behave in a conflictive manner when faced with water shortages is likely to translate into their starting an episode of armed violence or being willing to participate in one actively or whether on the contrary they are more likely to use Scott's 'weapons of the weak' (1990), since the paper also makes it clear that the women concerned do not feel able to challenge men directly. Both empirical data on armed conflicts and the sets of gender characteristics identified above

suggest that women are much less likely than men to take direct action of a violent kind when they find themselves in this kind of conflictive situation. This is not to say that women do not fight both informally and as soldiers but rather that the gender norms of most social groups are likely to inhibit their initiating armed conflicts, as opposed to young men, who are the most frequently represented group in all violent conflict both globally and in the East African region (Pearce 2007).

This paper then makes some attempt at moving beyond simple sex-disaggregated data to considering the implications of gender norms. However, it too can be seen more useful for providing an empirical basis for deeper probing into gender issues than for providing answers to the questions on gender raised by it.

Lindley's (2009) paper on the war in Somalia focuses on the processes that led people to the decision to leave Mogadishu and migrate to the much more peaceful surroundings of Somaliland in the north, a quite considerable journey away, as well as on the migration process itself. It shows how variegated the reasons were for different groups leaving and how gender plays a role both there and in the treatment of migrants en route to their new lives. Women are shown to have played an active economic role in Somalia, many successful businesses being female run. During the reign of the Islamic Courts, Mogadishu was generally quiet and this was a good time for women who felt safe in the streets while young men were vulnerable to being forcibly conscripted into the militia. After the Ethiopian invasion and the takeover by the Transitional Federal Government, women became vulnerable to being robbed by Ethiopian soldiers and/or raped, while men were more likely to be killed outright. During the flight from the capital to Somaliland rapes were frequent, putting women again in a particularly vulnerable position.

Gendered identity is shown here to be crucial to the treatment of individuals in this war zone. Women and men were affected in distinct ways, with men mostly likely to be conscripted or killed, women robbed and/or raped. Here again, the gender aspects of this paper are incidental to its main focus and not treated analytically. However, this data added to that from comparable situations elsewhere could usefully form the basis of a gender analysis of the differential treatment of the sexes in war zones.

Two studies of Muslim radicalism, Briggs and Birdwell's paper on radicals in the UK (2009) and Malashenko and Yarlykapov's paper on Russia (2009) focus mainly on young Muslim

men, their attitudes and actions in regard to radicalisation and terrorist acts, but also situate them in distinct ways within their histories and communities. Neither paper sets out to frame the discussion in any way in terms of gender. However, the fact that they deal almost exclusively with men provides some basis for a study of masculine identities in such socio-cultural groups.

My own work on the Acholi people of northern Uganda looks in some depth at the daily struggles for survival of the population of two villages in Gulu district as they return from the IDP camps and start rebuilding their lives. I work at multiple levels as I look at gendered divisions of labour, reproductive health issues of men and women, and the relevance of gender for local justice, while also dealing with issues of identity. Gender identities are shown to have been crucial to the ways the sufferings of the IDP camps were experienced but also to the moral and emotional rebuilding as well as the physical and material reconstruction of these rural lives. Furthermore, it is clear that just as in Tanzania in this context gender is highly gerontocratic, in ways that strongly impact daily human interactions. In other words, once again, gender is foundational for socio-cultural life, thus highlighting the conceptual richness revealed by including a gender analysis (Harris 2011a[7]).

Gender and global politics

The paper discussed in this section is from the gender workpackage, and examines the imbrication of gender at global and local levels. It shows how practices generally conceptualised as purely local or as intrinsic to organised crime may actually be embedded in notions of gender that derive from masculinist attitudes inherent in global politics. The apparent attention to women's vulnerabilities and needs enshrined in a series of UN Security Council Resolutions[8] come to look more like lip service than a serious attempt to transform the global system of gender inequalities. UN forces continue to find themselves at the centre of sexual abuse scandals (since the paper under discussion appeared further abuses have been reported by a number of peacekeeping forces).

---

[7] This paper is the first in a series that will deal with gender aspects of this conflict and does not in itself go into any conceptual depth, something that will be brought out later in the series.

[8] Starting with UNSCR 1325 (October 2000), continuing with UNSCR 1820 (June 2008), and also a number of attempts at insisting on responsible behaviour on the part of UN personnel stationed in post-conflict settings through for instance a zero-tolerance policy for sexual abuse.

The Jennings and Nikolić-Ristanović paper (2009) looks at how the mere presence of UN (and other international) forces in post-conflict zones tends to establish an environment in which sexual exploitation is rife, in large part because of the economic framework established there, much of which centres on sexual services for the international forces. That this may provide employment at a time when few other options exist does not excuse the fact that much of it is highly exploitative and this is particularly true for women and girls. The fact that this economy seems to spring up so quickly after an international mission appears may suggest to the members of the international community involved that this is the natural state of affairs in that community, that women generally make themselves sexually available in this way and thus that the international forces are not actually tampering with local practices or culture. As a result this kind of international-local transaction is naturalised and international actors take with them a distorted view of local customs and particularly of the deployment of femininity, while in fact the culture they experienced was highly distorted by the transactions with the international community.

This kind of economy appears to segue into organised crime with relative ease so that even after the departure of the international forces the negative effects remain in place undiminished. The impact on local communities is considerable. This may include the trafficking in of women from elsewhere as well as, after the departure of the international community, the trafficking out of the local women who had been involved in transactional sex to the next site of international attention. Testimonies suggest that in some places – certainly in former Yugoslavia – members of the international forces were directly involved in human trafficking and sexual enslavement and thus not mere consumers of the sexual commodities created by the post-conflict situation but active entrepreneurs in the trade themselves. All this is facilitated by the fact that in many settings women have a particularly hard time finding employment that will pay a living wage, but especially in post-conflict zones when the economy has not yet recovered and female-headed households proliferate, thus magnifying women's need to generate income.

Among the other effects of this kind of economy are new ways of enacting femininity – among them prettification, and subservience to men – and masculinity too – in this case a new model of macho man is most often found among those who have become rich through supplying the women for sexual exploitation and who expect their own sexual and gender relationships to be starkly unequal.

The UN's zero tolerance policy appears to have stopped the most obvious public flaunting of sexual abuse. However, rather than actually removing the abuse, it tends to send it underground, thus making it harder to police. What has not been attempted is any attack on the structures that produce this kind of exploitation. Blaming individual actors is hardly the point. As long as women, and children of both sexes and particularly those from marginalised social groups, are conceptualised as inferior, that is, as long as racism and sexism persist, this kind of behaviour will not disappear. The only meaningful way to tackle it is thus to carry out much more thorough revisions of gender power relations than have ever been attempted to date and at all socio-political levels from the upper echelons of international power to the most deprived inhabitants of the global south.

Jennings and Nikolić-Ristanović's analyses of the sexual economy established around the UN and other international forces show the work that gender analysis can do to unravel global economics and politics, and demonstrate the consequences of the sets of gender norms fundamental to contemporary politics and the global market system. Loretta Napoleoni has pointed out many of the inextricable intertwinings of the global economic system with organised crime, particularly in relation to war zones (2004) but also the role played by the international sex trade (2008). What she does not discuss is the way in which the UN and other institutions of the international community are not merely complicit with but actually participate in illegal trade. Laying bare these relationships can only be done by a gender analysis of the kind found in the Jennings and Nikolić-Ristanović paper (2009).

Conclusion – what we can learn about conflict from MICROCON's gender research and what this teaches us about the importance of using a gender analytical lens

All four levels of engagement with gender are important for our ability to grasp the meaning and function of the global gender order not only in relation to conflict but also at a more general level. Thus, the deep distinctions among conceptual levels of the papers discussed above should not be considered a measure of the value of each way of working with gender. Each one of them provides us with different but important data and/or information.

The statistical data from the Colombian study is invaluable as a basis both for policy decisions and for future research into gendered employment in Colombia and elsewhere but it also points us towards some unexpected consequences of conflict. We learn that conflict-induced migration has a more negative impact on incoming men's ability to adapt to new

employment-related situations than on women's and that it simultaneously negatively impacts urban women's earning capacities. Without such sex-disaggregated data as that presented here our potential for understanding both the labour-market issues and the conflict-related ones would be greatly diminished. Generally speaking, the skills required for serious quantitative studies and those needed for focussing on more theoretical gender issues are not found in the same people, while both sets are needed to provide a full picture of the situations they deal with. This kind of statistically based study then provides an excellent basis for the work of gender analysts.

While all the papers examined here could be used for policy purposes, those focusing on women's organisations and rights are particularly useful as they can be drawn upon directly without the need for reframing, their conceptual level being coherent with that of policy documents. This is particularly clear in the case of the Kindi paper with its explicit policy recommendations, less so in the Challand paper since its focus is not specifically on gender. The women's organisations of Israel and Palestine, while portrayed as crucial to grassroots peace efforts, are not the subject of the policy-related discussions in the paper concerned. Nevertheless, the materials on these organisations could easily be incorporated into a gender analysis on working with civil society in conflict zones.

Irrespective of their authors' intention, papers that provide clear data about one sex or the other are always useful for gender scholarship. This is the case with the two papers of this kind dealt with here – the two on Muslim radicalism – in which although not explicitly stated, it is obvious that they could not be dealing with anything except with men. They thus lend themselves to be used by scholars working on masculinities.

Finally, those papers that use a gender-analytical lens can serve both as gender studies in their own right and as the basis for further studies on gender issues.

Thus, the papers under discussion here can be divided into various camps. There are those that deliberately set out to contribute to gender scholarship and those that do so only incidentally. The former can be further divided into those that look at gender in a practical way, for instance, that examine women's issues, and those that apply a gender lens. While it is the latter that move us forward analytically, they could not do this without the more empirical contributions.

Enloe's insistence that those seeking an in-depth understanding of the social and political world require a feminist curiosity is borne out by the papers discussed here. Over and over they show how the lack of attention to gender can have repercussions far beyond what might be imagined.

Failure to pay attention to gendered employment issues means that the most vulnerable social groups may be adversely affected (Calderón and Ibáñez 2009). It also plays into the hands of those involved in organised crime and this tends to be especially an issue in conflict zones in part following on from the sex industry that accompanies the deployment of peacekeepers and indeed any large number of international staff in (post) conflict settings (Jennings and Nikolić-Ristanović 2009).

The continued failure on the part of the UN to take either gender or women's issues in conflict zones seriously, despite a number of recent Security Council Resolutions directly aimed at changing the situation, continues not only to disadvantage women but to increase tensions and generally depress economies recovering from conflicts (Kindi 2010). It is an almost universal phenomenon today that post-conflict settings in the global south (and east – including former Yugoslavia) are inundated with peacekeeping and humanitarian forces, both of which encourage the maltreatment of women as sex objects. The zero-tolerance policy established by the UN is not being taken seriously enough to make a meaningful difference here. We need more gender analyses such as those of Jennings and Nikolić-Ristanović (2009) to help us make sense of other aspects of (post)conflict life.

It is my fervent hope that the present paper will help readers who do not already take a gender approach to reread the papers discussed here through a different lens, one that will encourage them to think again about gender in their own work and perhaps try to learn more about how it can be used analytically. I also hope this paper will have convinced those who still thought of gender as a minor or irrelevant issue to reconsider.

The remarkable thing about this set of papers is that while most of the authors are not gender specialists they have nevertheless paid serious enough attention to gender issues that they have provided an important basis for further exploration by gender specialists. This should be regarded as a highly significant and positive outcome of MICROCON's gender policy.

References

Briggs, Rachel and Jonathan Birdwell (2009) Radicalisation among Muslims in the UK, *MICROCON Policy Working Paper*, no. 7.

Butler, Judith (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York and London: Routledge.

Butler, Judith (1997) *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, New York and London: Routledge.

Calderón, V. and Ibáñez, A-M. (2009) Labor Market Effects of Migration-Related Supply Shocks: Evidence from Internally Displaced Populations in Colombia, *MICROCON Research Working Paper,* no. 14.

Challand, Benoit, (2010) Coming Too Late? The EU's Mixed Approaches to Transforming the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, *MICROCON Policy Working Paper,* no. 12.

Bjørkhaug, Ingunn, Morten Bøås, Anne Hatløy and Kathleen M. Jennings ([2007]) returning to uncertainty? Addressing vulnerabilities in Northern Uganda, UNDP/Government of Uganda www.fafo.no/nyhet/return2uncertanity.pdf (accessed 3/1/2011).

Cohn, Carol (1993) Wars, Wimps, and Women: Talking Gender and Thinking War, in Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (eds), *Gendering War Talk,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,

Cohn, Carol and Sara Ruddick (2004) A Feminist Ethical Perspective on Weapons of Mass Destruction, in Sohail. H. Hashmi and Steven P. Lee (eds) *Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Religious and Secular Perspectives*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 405-435.

Enloe, Cynthia (1989) *Bananas, Bases and Beaches, Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Enloe, Cynthia (2000) *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives,* London: University of California Press.

Enloe, Cynthia (2007) *Globalization and militarism: feminists make the link,* Plymouth: Rowman &: Littlefield Publishers.

Esplen, Emily and Susie Jolly (2006) GENDER and SEX: A sample of definitions, Bridge, Institute of Development Studies, http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/go/home&id=24760&type=Document (accessed 1/1/2011).

Gramsci, Antonio (1971) *Excerpts from the Prison Notebooks*, London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Harris, Colette (2004) *Control and Subversion: Gender relations in Tajikistan*, London: Pluto Press.

Harris, Colette (2007) MICROCON gender framework, unpublished MICROCON document.

Harris, Colette (2011) Affairs of the State: gender, sex and marriage in Tajikistan, *Central Asian Survey*, 30-1.

Harris, Colette (2011a) Return and survival in Gulu: an ethnographic study in two northern Ugandan villages, Part I, *MICROCON Research Working Paper XX*.

Harris, Colette (forthcoming 2011) Community-based pedagogies, religion and conflict resolution in Kaduna, Nigeria, in Lee Marsden (ed.), *Ashgate Research Companion on Religion and Conflict Resolution*, Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

Hollway, Wendy (1989) *Subjectivity and method in psychology: Gender, Meaning and Science*, London: Sage.

Hutchings, Kimberley (2008) Cognitive Shortcuts, in Jane L. Parpart and Marysia Zalewski (eds), *Rethinking the Man Question:* sex, *gender and violence in international relations,* London: Zed Books, 23-46.

Jennings, Kathleen M. and V Nikolić-Ristanović (2009) UN Peacekeeping Economies and Local Sex Industries: Connections and Implications, *MICROCON Research Working Paper*, no. 17.

Kindi, Fred Immanuel (2010) Challenges and Opportunities for Women's Land Rights in the Post-Conflict Northern Uganda, *MICROCON Research Working Paper*, no. 26.

Lecoutere, Els., Ben d'Exelle, and Bjorn van Campenhout (2010) Who Engages in Water Scarcity Conflicts? A Field Experiment with Irrigators in Semi-arid Africa, *MICROCON Research Working Paper,* no. 31.

Lindley, Anna (2009) Leaving Mogadishu: The War on Terror and Displacement Dynamics in the Somali Regions, *MICROCON Research Working Paper,* no. 15.

Malashenko, Aleksei and Akhmed Yarlykapov (2009) Radicalisation of Russia's Muslim Community, *MICROCON Policy Working Paper,* no. 9.

Marx, Karl (1972) *The German Ideology*, New York: International Publishers.

Moore, Henrietta (2007) *The Subject of Anthropology: Gender, Symbolism and Psychoanalysis*, Cambridge: Polity.

Napoleoni, Loretta (2004) *Terror Inc: Tracing the Money behind Global Terrorism*, London: Penguin.

Napoleoni, Loretta (2008) *Rogue economics, capitalism's new reality,* Crows Nest, NSW: Allyn and Unwin.

Pearce, Jenny (2007) Bringing violence 'back home': gender socialisation and the transmission of violence through time and space in Mary Kaldor et al (eds), *Civil Society 2006/7*, London: Sage, 42-61.

Scott, James (1990) *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Silverman, Kaja (1992) *Male subjectivity at the margins*. New York: Routledge.

Stoltenberg, John (2000) *Refusing to Be a Man: Essays on Sex and Justice*, London: UCL Press.

Wright, Melissa W. (2006) *Disposable Women and Other Myths of Global Capitalism*, New York: Routledge.