

Constitutional reform and the Women, Peace and Security agenda

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Women, Peace and Security: Breaking down silos

Abstract

This paper examines how post-conflict constitutional reform can be used to advance gender equality goals, the ways in which women activists mobilise to influence constitutional reform, and how international actors support such mobilisation. It explores how the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda can potentially be an important framework for promoting women's participation in constitutional reform processes, framing women's demands in relation to constitutional content, and pressing for implementation of constitutional commitments on gender equality and women's rights.

The paper finds that, while international actors do frequently support women's participation and gender equality content within constitutional reforms, they do not sufficiently connect this support to wider work on WPS in ways that could strengthen their overall engagement and reinforce its impact. A more coherent approach to support for WPS and constitutional reform could begin with the identification of common goals, entry points, and opportunities for traction across these two areas. This requires a broader definition of the WPS agenda, as well reaching out beyond thematic silos to

explore interconnections and opportunities for coordinated action by those working on WPS and on wider reform processes.



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About this publication

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Acronyms

CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of the Discrimination of Women
CSO	civil-society organisations
IDEA	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
NAP	National Action Plan
R-ARCSS	Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan
UNSCR	United National Security Council Resolutions
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

1 The mutual relevance of constitutional reform and WPS

Constitutional reform has become an increasingly central element of peacebuilding, with 75 countries having undertaken constitutional reform in the wake of armed conflict, civil unrest, or democratic transition between 1990 and 2015 (Tamaru and O'Reilly, 2018). This trend has been driven by a growing international focus on the potential of constitutional reform to support transitions from conflict to stability, notably by establishing a more inclusive and democratic state–society contract, and shaping a wider horizontal relationship of civic trust (Bell, 2017). Domingo et al. (2016) describe how recent global trends in constitutional reform demonstrate a greater focus on inclusive and participatory processes and detailed and ambitious normative content, although there remains limited evidence regarding their transformational impact.

Constitution-making in post-conflict contexts is particularly complex. The disruption caused by conflict can create potential for transformational constitutional reform. The extent of this potential, however, is often circumscribed by the terms of the preceding peace or transition agreement, while efforts to establish a more inclusive political settlement through constitutional reform must not threaten any narrow elite bargain that brought an end to conflict. While in more stable settings, constitutions frequently express and perpetuate a well-established political settlement and balance of power, in unstable post-conflict settings, 'constitutions must often play a more developmental role in terms of building consensus, as a form of conflict-resolution mechanism' Sapiano (2015). These complex dynamics shape the context for efforts to advance gender equality and women's rights through constitutional reform processes.

1.1 Constitutional reform as an opportunity to advance women's participation and rights

Women's participation in constitution-making has expanded over the past two decades, going from an average of 13% between 1990 and 1995 to an average of 24% between 2010 and 2015 (Tamaru and O'Reilly, 2018). Moreover, women are increasingly taking on a range

of roles in these reform processes, including as drafters and technical experts. There are various reasons for this increase in women's participation in constitutional reform. Tamaru and O'Reilly (2018) point to growing demands for democratic participation worldwide since the third wave of democratisation in the 1980s; women's increased representation in politics and legal domains; and international commitments to broader participation and inclusion.

It is clear that post-conflict constitutional reforms have significant potential to advance women's rights. Tripp (2016) compares constitutions drafted within a similar timeframe in conflict-affected and non-conflict-affected African countries and finds that 'the patterns are fairly clear, with post-conflict constitutions being much more likely to adopt more provisions supporting women's rights broadly defined'. Likewise, UN Women (2017) reports that 94% of post-conflict constitutions contain gender-based anti-discriminatory provisions, and 75% of post-conflict constitutions refer to gender quotas, compared to 25% of non-post-conflict constitutions.

However, promoting gender equality in post-conflict constitutional reform poses various challenges. In particular, where women are excluded from initial bargaining processes to end conflict and establish a roadmap for peace, then constitutional reform processes that flow from this peacebuilding are less likely to include and specifically benefit women. Moreover, women's demands in relation to constitutional reform can promote backlash and resistance from male elites whose power they threaten. In highly polarised conflict-affected contexts it may be difficult for women to come together across identity-based divides to mobilise in relation to constitutional reform. For example, in South Sudan differences among women activists related to age, rural or urban identities, and language have limited women's ability to work together to advance WPS goals, including in relation to constitutional reform.

There is some evidence that women's participation in constitutional reform can contribute to peacebuilding goals. Tamaru and O'Reilly (2018) found that where women successfully influenced the constitutional process, they contributed to bridging communal divides and advancing consensus; broadening social participation and informing policymakers of diverse priorities; and advancing constitutional provisions for more equitable, inclusive societies. Likewise, Paffenholz et al. (2016) found evidence that post-conflict peace and transition processes that were more inclusive of women were more successful.

1.2 Constitutional reform and the WPS agenda

The WPS agenda – as expressed in ten UN Security Council Resolutions and expanded in 20 years of policy and practice – is 'the most significant and wide-reaching global framework for advancing

gender equality in military affairs, conflict resolution and security governance' (Basu et al., 2020). It is focused around four pillars: the role of women in conflict prevention; women's participation in peace-making and peacebuilding; the protection of women's rights during and after conflict; and women's specific needs during repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration, and post-conflict reconstruction.

Constitutional reform processes following conflict have the potential to advance many aspects of the WPS agenda, particularly related to women's participation and women's rights. Moreover, the WPS agenda can be an important framework for promoting women's participation in such processes, framing women's demands in relation to constitutional content, and pressing for implementation of constitutional commitments on gender and women's rights. The WPS agenda also has the potential to be a framework for coherent international action to support women's participation and gender equality content in constitutional reform. As yet, however, there remains limited evidence on how in practice women, gender equality advocates, and international actors connect their work on WPS and constitutional reform to advance women's participation and rights.

2 Constitutional reform and WPS in the literature

2.1 Constitutional reform literature

There is a sizable body of literature on inclusive constitution-building, within which there is a small but growing body of work on gender and constitutional reform (e.g. Waylen, 2014; International IDEA, 2014; UNDP, 2016; and various Inclusive Security publications). This work starts from a recognition of the potential for constitutional reform to advance gender equality goals in post-conflict contexts. For example, a compilation of good practice in this area finds that ‘A constitution, therefore, provides in most cases the strongest legal means of protecting and promoting gender equality ... Constitutions provide gender equality advocates with powerful tools to challenge the historical and continuing experiences of inequality that women experience in the courts, workplaces, homes and in all aspects of their lives’ (UNDP, 2016).

Within the literature on gender and constitutional reform there is a significant amount of analysis regarding gender equality content within constitutions (e.g. Tamaru and O’Reilly, 2018; UN Women, 2017; UNDP, 2016; International IDEA, 2014). This work tends to provide options for language on gender equality; provisions for equality and non-discrimination; the definition of citizenship rights, and political, civil, economic and social rights; ways to incorporate international treaties and conventions that protect women’s rights into constitutional reforms; special temporary measures; and institutional protection of women’s rights.

It is notable that most of the literature on gender and constitutional reform makes no reference to the WPS agenda. This seems surprising, given that constitutional reform is such an important opportunity to advance WPS goals, and WPS provides a valuable framework to make claims in relation to constitutional reform processes and content. However, it perhaps reflects the insular way in which these areas are addressed, as well as the common perception of WPS as a limited agenda tightly focused on peace and security processes.

2.2 WPS literature

Although the literature on WPS does tend to include mention of constitutional reform, this is limited and underexplored. The justification for working on constitutional reform under the WPS agenda goes back to UNSCR 1325, which calls for measures concerning the human rights of women and girls ‘particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary’ (UNSCR 1325, 2000). Likewise, the Global Study on implementation of UNSCR 1325 recognises that ‘As the aftermath of conflict is almost always accompanied by constitutional and legislative reforms, it is an important moment of opportunity to entrench gender equality and equal rights across all legal system’ (UN Women, 2015).

While constitutional reform is mentioned both in guidance for WPS implementation (e.g. UN Women, 2012; International Alert, 2010) and in analysis of WPS implementation (e.g. UN Women, 2015), the focus tends to be on promoting women’s participation in reform processes and including gender equality provisions in the text of the constitution. There is relatively little exploration of the political economy of constitutional reform and the opportunities and challenges this creates for advancing WPS goals; or of how women in practice influence constitutional reform negotiations from within or outside the formal process.

There is little analysis either in the gender and constitutional reform literature or in the WPS literature, that goes beyond the moment of constitutional reform to examine how gender equality provisions are implemented and used over time, or of their impact. There is often limited recognition that meaningful implementation can be a long-term project that requires deep-rooted political and social change. Indeed, some of the literature appears to involve a problematic assumption that the inclusion of women in constitutional reform processes and adoption of gender equality content in constitutional texts will inevitably lead to gender equality outcomes. As Domingo et al. (2016) point out ‘There is relatively little political analysis of how constitutional reform processes unfold and with what impact’. The WPS agenda could add value to such a longer-term and multi-level approach to constitutional reform in post-conflict settings, including as a framework for mobilising for and supporting meaningful implementation of constitutional rights and provisions for different groups of women.

3 Gender equality changes through constitutional reform

3.1 Disruption of conflict creates openings for women

Conflict profoundly disrupts power relations, including gender power relations, and this disruption, combined with an opening of democratic political space that often follows conflict, provides critical entry points for women to access and influence constitutional reform processes. Indeed, UN Women (2017) documents how, in a range of contexts, the disruption of traditional gender roles in conflict, combined with the fact that post-conflict transitions create ‘political openings’ for women to make claims, lays the ground for women to make far-reaching gender equality demands as part of constitutional reform. Likewise, Tripp (2016) describes how in various countries across Africa, post-conflict democratisation processes created new space for women’s activism and debates on gender equality, and how ‘autonomous women’s movements emerged either as part of peace movements during the war or in the aftermath of conflict to serve as catalysts for many of the constitutional and legal challenges’ (Tripp, 2016). Tripp also describes how these emerging women’s movements used the normative framework on women’s rights promoted by UN and other international agencies as a framework for their demands.

The case of Kenya illustrates these dynamics very clearly. The advent of political pluralism in 1992 created political space for women to develop strong and independent feminist organisations. When the 2007 post-election violence left the political elite in disarray, these women’s organisations were well placed to insert themselves into political processes – including constitutional reform – and advance demands for gender equality, including by drawing on international normative frameworks and mobilising significant international support. Interestingly, Kenyan women used the WPS framework to demand inclusion and voice in the peace process, but did not then use it to make demands of the constitutional reform process. Instead, they drew on other international normative frameworks, including CEDAW and African Commission on Human and People’s Rights, to advance a specifically Kenyan agenda of gender equality (Domingo

et al., 2016). This may be because Kenyan women did not perceive WPS to be particularly relevant to constitutional reform, or as a framework that would have traction in this regard.

The informal brokering and formal peace processes that bring an end to conflict often shape and delimit the nature of post-conflict constitution processes. The inclusion of women and gender equality issues within peace processes can therefore be critical for advancing women's inclusion and gender equality goals in future constitutional reform. A particularly complex interplay between peace agreements and constitutions can be seen in South Sudan, with different phases of peace-brokering and constitutional development building upon each other. South Sudan's 2011 Transitional Constitution contained some commitments to gender quotas, which were significantly built on and expanded in the 2018 Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). The R-ARCSS in turn outlined steps to develop a Permanent Constitution, including a commitment to include women's groups in consultations for its development and sit on the National Constitution Review Committee. While progress on developing this permanent constitution has been slow and difficult, women activists are advocating for it to build on and expand existing gender equality commitments in both the existing transitional constitution and the peace agreement.

3.2 Advancing women's participation in constitutional processes

There is limited comparative analysis of the factors that advance women's participation in constitutional processes. Tamaru and O'Reilly (2018) provide one of the few analyses of this, showing that women have been more successful in ensuring their participation in constitutional reform processes when they have mobilised early to influence how these processes are structured and the constitutional reform body is selected; pushed for mechanisms such as quotas to promote participation; demonstrated their expertise and ability once inside the constitutional reform body to overcome being seen as token; presented a united front in their efforts to increase women's inclusion; and leveraged connections with civil society to broaden women's access beyond direct participation.

In some cases, where structural and norm-related constraints create significant barriers to women's participation, special mechanisms can help ensure that it happens. For example, in Afghanistan, the constitution-making body met separately with women's groups and youth so that they could speak freely about their views and aspirations.

3.3 Advancing women's influence in constitutional processes

Although women are participating in constitutional reform processes in ever greater numbers, it does not mean that they are always successful in influencing these processes. As Waylen (2014) argues, 'ensuring women's "presence" may be necessary as a mobilising idea and a way of incorporating women actors into processes, but it is not sufficient to ensure gender-friendly outcomes'. There is some evidence regarding in what contexts and through what strategies women are best able to exert influence within constitutional reform processes.

Tripp (2014) describes how '... countries that have gone the furthest in advancing women's constitutional rights were generally places where women's movements were most active around these issues, where the processes were relatively transparent and inclusive, and where this inclusion was generally supported also by foreign donors'. Waylen (2014) reports that women are better able to take advantage of opportunities offered by constitutional reform when they are present at all levels and in various roles within these processes, and where there are gender leaders who provide strategic thinking. The case of Somalia illustrates this point about multiple roles, as it was Somali women's involvement at the technical level that enabled them to insert gender-sensitive language into the constitution (Tripp, 2016)

Tamaru and O'Reilly (2018) stress that key ingredients of successful influence include framing demands for gender equality in relation to overarching goals of peace or democracy; ensuring women have a clear understanding of the constitution-making process, key actors, and major interests; and cultivating strategic alliances and broad coalitions within and outside the constitutional reform body. Likewise, UN Women (2017) stresses the importance of building alliances, exploiting strategic entry points, and engaging male leaders. UN Women (2017) documents how gender equality advocates can influence constitutional design from different locations, including women's movements, gender machineries, constitutional review bodies, parliamentary gender caucuses, law reform commissions, regional bodies and others. Strategic alliances among these actors have been crucial to advancing gender equality within the constitution-making agenda, as seen in cases such as Kenya and Tunisia.

Women face a range of obstacles in influencing constitution-making processes and outcomes. These include perceptions of women as token members of decision-making bodies; community and social hostility towards women's inclusion; barriers to building strong coalitions; and side-lining of women's demands in favour of the interests of more powerful groups (Tamaru and O'Reilly, 2018). Women can also face significant structural barriers – such as cost,

literacy, and language – that prevent them from accessing and influencing constitutional reform processes. Non-elite women face particularly severe challenges in making their voices heard within constitution-making processes, and may not be well represented by those speaking on behalf of women in these processes. In many cases, it is upper-class urban women associated with political parties or large civil society organisations (CSOs) that are most likely to obtain a seat at the constitution-making table. These women are not always best placed to represent indigenous or rural women or advance constitutional content that reflects their interests.

Evidence suggests that in order to successfully influence constitutional reform processes, women's engagement must be based on an understanding of how each step of the constitution-making process relates to broader power struggles and negotiations over the political settlement, and to the interests and strategies of other actors. For example, Waylen (2014) describes the 'need to open up the "black box" of the processes of negotiation and settlement surrounding institutional creation and design. This will allow us to understand not just the formal, but also the informal dimensions that have an impact on participants' strategies and tactics and on outcomes'. She also points to the ways in which formal constitutional processes are often dominated by informal male networks, who negotiate in informal spaces that women cannot access, posing a major challenge to women's influence.

The WPS agenda is an important framework for analysis and action regarding women's participation and rights in post-conflict settings and over the last 20 years a rich body of experience and evidence has been developed under this agenda. The WPS agenda therefore has potential to add value to understandings of how women can best be supported to access and meaningfully participate in and influence constitutional reform; potential as a basis for making demands related to constitutional reform; and potential as a framework for coordinating action and support, particularly by international actors with commitments and action plans to fulfil WPS.

4 International support for gender equality within constitutional reform

In many post-conflict contexts international agencies provide support for women's participation in constitutional reform. This support is part of wider international focus on inclusive constitution-building and the promotion of international norms following conflict. It is also driven by international commitments to fund, advance and report on the WPS framework.

The strength and effectiveness of international support to women's participation in constitutional reform varies widely in different contexts. In Nepal, international actors provided strong and consistent international support for women – including from the most marginalised groups – to mobilise and build alliances to influence constitutional reform processes from inside and outside. This was combined with international support for the development of a National Action Plan (NAP) that included a focus on ensuring 'women's participation both in quantity and quality' in the constitution making bodies and other bodies of state (Nepal NAP 2011–2015). This NAP provided an important framework to advance women's participation in constitutional reform processes, as well as to make demands for quotas within elected bodies at national and subnational level to be enshrined in constitution. As a result of women's mobilisation, the principle of proportional inclusion of women was enshrined in the 2015 Constitution of Nepal and women now make up over 30% of elected positions across all three tiers of government in the country (UN Women, 2020).

In contrast, the Somali constitution-making process 'shows the limits of women's mobilization when they are not adequately supported by international actors... [and] shows how women's demands were swallowed up within manipulations of politicians who had narrower interests and political ambitions' (Tripp, 2016). While there was support from some UN agencies to advance women's rights at various stages of the constitutional reform process, ultimately the UN endorsed a flawed and opaque final process that resulted in a constitution that did not meet women's demands.

4.1 Strategies for international support

International agencies can use various strategies to support women's participation and influence within constitutional reform. For example, Waylen (2014) argues that international actors can support gender activists inside and outside constitutional processes with financial and technical resources. They can also pressure other actors – such as political parties – to ensure that gender actors are present and that formal and informal structures facilitate their effective participation. Tamaru and O'Reilly (2018) argue that international actors can provide flexible funding and support for women's early mobilisation initiatives, as well as assistance for training focused on advocacy and strategic messaging. International actors that support women's movements can also encourage meaningful relationships of representation and accountability between the women leaders who tend to participate in constitutional processes, and the grassroots women whom they seek to represent.

International agencies may also play an important role supporting strategic alliances among women and facilitating consensus on a common women's agenda for constitutional reform. For example, in post-conflict Nepal, women initially mobilised primarily around community identity issues, with Dalit women mobilising around caste-based discrimination, Madhesi women around language and customary practices, and Janajati women around access to services. However, long-term and strategic international support from helped these diverse women's movements to build national-level advocacy coalitions (El-Bushra, 2012). In addition, international actors can also facilitate peer-exchange opportunities for women in different contexts working to influence constitutional reform.

4.2 Limitations of international support

The evidence suggests that international agencies may face significant challenges in supporting women's participation and influence in constitutional reform. These challenges include building trust among the various actors, maintaining a balance between being non-prescriptive while advocating for the inclusion of international commitments on gender equality, and remaining engaged beyond short-term programme cycles (Castillejo, 2018). However, the biggest challenge is perhaps understanding the complexity of political bargaining around the political settlement in post-conflict contexts, and identifying how this shapes opportunities for advancing gender equality within constitution building. As Bell (2017) argues, 'without a good understanding of the contingencies of the underlying political settlement and its very partial nature, any attempt to support constitutional development is likely to be outwitted by local elite gameplaying'.

Constitutional reform can involve a radical rewriting of the formal rules, creating a large gap between the new – ideally more gender-equal – constitutional order and the reality of existing laws, institutions and practices. Support for effective implementation, oversight, and redress mechanisms (which should ideally be mandated in the constitution) is critical to helping close this gap. Often, however, international actors do not give sufficient priority to such support for implementation, seeing the promulgation of the constitution as the ‘end point’, paying less attention to what happens next.

Ensuring the realisation of constitutional gender equality commitments requires ongoing investment in a broad range of implementation strategies, as well as oversight and redress mechanisms. It also requires taking account of the ways in which constitutional provisions for gender equality may be resisted at multiple levels by various actors, whose interests are threatened by such changes. For example, in Kenya there has been strong resistance at all levels to implementing women’s rights to land under the new constitution, driven by political and economic interests and social norms. Realising constitutional commitments to gender equality also requires understanding and addressing the ways in which legacies of conflict may have weakened capacity to implement these commitments, whether through increased corruption, lower levels of female literacy, or damaged physical infrastructure.

There appears to be a need for greater and more sustained international support for implementation of constitutional provisions for gender equality, at different levels. Dziedzic (2016) describes how implementation involves putting constitutional provisions into practice through processes of technical implementation, constitutional interpretation, and cultural change. Domingo et al. (2016) argue that international actors should support ‘accountability, oversight and constitutional implementation mechanisms, and women’s engagement with these, including the implementation of constitution oversight mechanisms and strategic litigation strategies that can activate judicial review and oversight’. However, such a focus on implementation and long-term impact requires longer time horizons than are typical in development programmes, including WPS work. International IDEA argues that international actors should avoid setting an artificial time boundary for when a constitution-making process is complete, arguing that ‘any assumption that a referendum followed by the enactment of a constitution marks a conclusive transformation of conflict into a political contest within rules misunderstands the nature and difficulties of transitions’ (International IDEA, 2011). Instead, International IDEA calls for a greater focus on implementation of new constitutions and building the capacity of new democratic institutions.

5 Interconnection between international support for WPS and constitutional reform

Although the WPS literature does tend to refer to constitutional reform as an opportunity to advance women's participation and rights, in practice there is limited evidence of international actors connecting work on WPS to their engagement on constitutional reform. In some cases, such as Nepal, some linkages can be seen, including through the inclusion of issues related to the constitution in an internationally supported NAP. In other contexts, such as Kenya, there is little evidence that international actors linked their support for women's mobilisation on constitutional reform to the WPS agenda. This may be in part because – as in the case of Kenya – local women's movements did not use the WPS agenda to frame demands.

While international actors may not always connect their work on WPS and constitutional reform, in reality work in these two areas share a number of key goals related to voice and participation, decision-making and rights. It is important for international actors to recognise where these goals align within a given context, and identify opportunities to move beyond existing silos and connect work across these areas where this can provide greater traction. In particular, it is useful to reflect on how the national WPS NAP can provide a framework for shared commitment between national and international stakeholders on these goals, as well as a framework for coherent and consistent international support to them.

While there is little evidence of 'joined-up' international approaches to providing support to constitutional reform and to WPS, it does appear that international engagement in both of these areas frequently shares similar weaknesses. In particular, engagement is undermined by a failure to understand and take account of the complex and shifting power dynamics in post-conflict contexts. As Bell (2017) describes, in many cases international actors have 'misunderstood the local political dynamics of the transitions... Where they once believed peaceful liberal democracy was taking hold, they now see complex and contingent local bargains over access to power. These bargains

often frustrate and even subvert the outworking of the political and legal institutions in which international actors placed their faith for transition'. This includes international actors' failure to understand how gender inequalities relate to wider power dynamics, interests and bargaining processes, or the ways in which this wider political economy context enables or constrains efforts to advance gender equality within constitution-making. Indeed, a recent study of gender equality programmes in conflict-affected contexts found 'serious weaknesses in donors' understanding of how political economy factors and power relations shape conflict, fragility and gender relations [and] what these factors and connections mean for trajectories of political and social change in fragile situations' (Van Heen et al., 2017).

In order that international actors successfully support gender equality within constitutional reform and implementation, they need to understand both how these constitutional processes relate to broader contestations and negotiations over the political settlement, and how women's rights are caught up in such contestations. For example, in Burundi, despite constitutional commitments to equality, women's demands for equal inheritance rights were strongly resisted by the government and political elite because they threatened power structures based on exclusionary patterns of land access. Likewise, in Nepal a lack of attention to how struggles over women's rights related to wider contestations between identity-based elites over the post-conflict political settlement meant that many international actors failed to recognise how tensions related to Nepal's relationship with India and the status of the ethnic Madhesi population along the border undermined women's demands for equal citizenship status in the new constitution.

Equally, it is important to understand how women can and do position their demands within the broader political economy of constitutional reform, for example by drawing on particular political or cultural discourses. For instance, in Morocco in 2011 women situated their claims for stronger constitutional rights within broader demands for democratisation that emerged from the 'Arab Spring', taking advantage of the fact that the Moroccan government was under pressure to offer some political opening and economic liberalisation in response to the rise of political Islam and external pressures from Morocco's Western allies (Castillejo and Tilley, 2015).

6 Conclusion

International actors do largely recognise that post-conflict constitutional reform processes provide critical opportunities to advance gender equality goals. They also frequently support women's participation and influence within constitutional processes and promote the inclusion of gender equality provisions within constitutional content, adopting a variety of strategies to do this.

However, the evidence suggests that international actors do not sufficiently connect this support to constitutional reform with their wider work on WPS agendas in ways that could strengthen their overall engagement and reinforce its impact. A starting point for a more coherent approach to support for WPS and constitutional reform could be the identification of common goals, entry points, and opportunities for traction across these two areas. This requires staff working on WPS and on constitutional reform to move beyond their respective thematic areas and explore interconnections, as well as to engage with stakeholders beyond their usual interlocutors.

The WPS agenda is potentially an important framework for promoting women's participation in constitutional reform processes, framing women's demands in relation to constitutional content, and pressing for implementation of constitutional commitments on gender equality and women's rights. NAPs, in particular, can act both as the articulation of a shared commitment by government, international actors, and civil society; and as a framework for coordinating responses, developing strategies and activities, and monitoring progress. However, in order to play this role, NAPs must avoid a narrow and inward-looking definition of the WPS agenda, and should instead explicitly address wider change processes such as constitutional reform, articulating how WPS is relevant to these.

It is clear that international support for constitutional reform and for the WPS agenda often shares some similar weaknesses, notably a limited understanding of the complex power dynamics and bargaining processes that accompany peacebuilding and post-conflict reform, and the implications of these for advancing women's participation, gender equality and other normative goals. Work on constitutional reform and on WPS would benefit from more politically informed approaches. In particular, from investing in analysis to understand the following factors, as well as from developing of strategies and programmes that take account of them:

- How constitutional reform processes relate to the wider political economy and bargaining over the political settlement, and the ways in which gender issues are caught up in these dynamics.
- The different demands articulated by different groups of women, and how women position these demands in relation to the wider political economy and bargaining over the political settlement.
- How wider interests, identities and cleavages shape opportunities for women to mobilise around a common agenda for constitutional reform.
- Issues of voice, power and representativeness within women's movements and how they affect women's engagement in constitutional reform.
- Where, how, and in relation to which issues there may be resistance to advancing women's rights, both during constitutional reform processes and in relation to implementation of constitutional provisions.
- Potential entry points, opportunities, and alliances to advance gender-sensitive constitutional reform and WPS goals.

International support to constitutional reform processes focuses heavily on the moment of reform and on the mechanisms and processes for drafting the new constitution. While these are obviously critical, the evidence suggests that it is also important to engage at other stages, in particular to shape the context for constitutional reform and follow up on implementation. The WPS framework could potentially be of value for such longer-term engagement on constitutional change, given that it covers all stages of conflict, peacebuilding and recovery, and that WPS priorities are regularly rearticulated at the national level through the development of new NAPs. Such a longer-term approach would include:

- Supporting women in initial peace negotiations that shape the context for any constitutional reform that follows.
- Supporting women's voices in early discussions and decisions about the nature of constitutional reform.
- Supporting women's participation within constitutional reform processes, as well as women's mobilisation to influence the process from outside.
- Supporting implementation of constitutional provisions for gender equality and women's rights. This is where there is a need for far more focus if constitutional reforms are to have real impact for women. It would include support for the development of legislation; for the establishment of implementation and oversight institutions; for women's mobilisation and advocacy, for strategic litigation; and for addressing resistance and creating an enabling environment for implementation at multiple levels.

Finally, it is clear that there are still significant evidence gaps regarding how gender equality and women's rights can be advanced through constitutional reform in conflict-affected contexts. It would be useful for international actors to invest in gathering more detailed evidence of what works in this area, documenting experiences across several countries, and facilitating the sharing of knowledge among those who are working on these issues at multiple levels. Such learning could enrich both the WPS agenda and work on constitutional reform, as well help illuminate and strengthen connections between them.

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