Voice, Agency and Participation
Consultation during Fragility Forum 2013
May 2, 2013

Jeni Klugman presented an overview of the voice, agency and participation report, highlighting state fragility and conflict as a cross cutting issue, and solicited feedback from those in attendance (attendance list included in annex A). Sanam Anderlini (ICAN) and Ian Bannon (World Bank) served as key discussants.

General feedback and key messages included the following:

Political Dimensions: Voice and agency are inherently political and in many countries coming out of turmoil we have seen the rise of political parties with regressive ideologies toward women. What are the underlying norms that allow for the rise of these ideologies and how can we best tackle the forces that are opposed to women's voice and agency?

Effectiveness of Quotas: In several countries quotas have been put in place to increase political participation of women. In many cases political parties - as in Yemen and Egypt - promote women who will toe conservative party lines, or in some cases women whose beliefs are more conservative than their male counterparts. In this light the effectiveness of quotas will be determined by the processes in place to get women onto party lists. In Liberia there has been a general backlash to the presence of women in powerful positions. In Rwanda on the other hand political quotas seem to have been more effective in promoting women's voice and agency. It was suggested that a deeper comparative analysis was needed to determine the actual impact of quotas on women's lives.

Build on what exists: A lot of research has already been conducted and the report will need to build on that. While quantitative data may be difficult to obtain from FCS, there is a quite a bit of qualitative data available. Useful resources includes Sanam Anderlini's qualitative review on women in FCS (2002-2004) and a case study from Zimbabwe where reforms aimed at reducing GBV were introduced in the police in the late 1980s. It should also draw on of the work on agency being done at the global level through CSW, the UN and civil society groups.

Collective Action: Strong women's movements often exist in FCS and they play a critical role in being drivers of change and promoting peace. This was seen in South Africa, Liberia, Nepal, Columbia and Northern Ireland. The critical challenge comes after the process of transition, when women and women's collective groups are pushed out of the political and decision making sphere. There is a real need to explore how women's groups better can be supported to ensure continuous participation both during and after transitional processes, and gain a better understanding of how these collective processes can improve women's voice and agency.

Conceptual: The report should make a distinction between conflict and fragility. Conflict is an event, while fragility is a continuum. Furthermore fragile states are very diverse, and have differing degrees of institutional capacities, such that the effectiveness of interventions will vary depending on context. The

changing nature of conflict will also be important to consider. Whereas in the past we had traditional conflicts lending themselves to SCR 1325, we now see a different type of conflict in which there is no "peace table" or peace agreement in the traditional sense of the terms. Rarely do women get to take part in these backroom deals.

GBV and conflict: Over the past decade GBV has manifested itself beyond comprehension in DRC. The behaviors have become normalized and accepted as social norms. But we don't know enough about how to change those norms – this is one of the biggest knowledge gaps. It was recommended for the report address this, in particular with a focus on tools and interventions that target both men and women.

Human Rights: The report needs to address human rights. Human rights can be an important instrument for bringing about changes in women's voice and agency. Yet there is a gap in knowledge on how human rights and international legal frameworks can be used at the local level. What is the role for the international community in post-conflict settings – should it be a "do no harm" approach, or does the international community have a more involved and critical role to play in helping to create spaces to allow broad based participation of the local population.

Land: The number of female headed households tends to increase as a result of conflict, yet these settings are often not accounted for in land titling and inheritance reforms in post-conflict settings. Need a broader focus on women's access to resources in post-conflict settings, with an emphasis on female headed households.

Media: Not enough has been done to fully examine the role of the media, and specifically women in the media. They can play a critical role in influencing and shaping attitudes and norms towards women.

Specific examples

Family formation: Evidence from the Sahel suggests the combination of climate change and conflict has led increased instability. Consequently families have started to marry their daughters off earlier as coping mechanism.

Freedom of movement: In DRC there has been an increase in cross border trading, and study by the World Bank highlighted women as being particularly vulnerable to gender based violence at border crossings.