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Gender and Conflict Early Warning in the IGAD Region: Making a Case for an Alternative, Context Specific Approach

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GENDER AND CONFLICT EARLY WARNING IN THE IGAD REGION:

MAKING A CASE FOR AN ALTERNATIVE, CONTEXT SPECIFIC APPROACH

This paper is the result of a background study conducted by the ALC in collaboration with IGAD-CEWARN in September 2012

Introduction

This paper attempts to make a case for bridging some of the gaps that exist in Conflict Early Warning in CEWARN with a particular focus on the gender dimensions. In doing so, it creates an opportunity to include this gender dimension (an overlooked concept in Conflict Early Warning) in all levels in the CEWARN Mechanism. In particular, it argues for the need to outline some of the key gender indicators that can be used to predict a conflict in ways that are distinct from the indicators used to determine the level of development or (in) security in a given country. The conflation of conflict early warning indicators with general development indicators is a recurring gap in the gender and early warning analysis.

The paper addresses itself to three sets of interrelated questions:

- What purpose does the inclusion of gender indicators in conflict early warning serve? Are there priority issues in this regard?
- What differentiates conflict indicators from those of broader (in)security and development? Why does this matter for CEWARN and the IGAD region?
- What can the IGAD region learn – conceptually and practically – from existing work on gender and conflict early warning?

The paper also proposes an agenda for inclusion of gender indicators in CEWARN in the IGAD region.

The discussion in this paper takes into account the internal strategic review processes that have been undertaken within CEWARN-IGAD in recent times. CEWARN's strategic periods, all anchored in its conflict early warning and response mandate, have blended into one another, each successive one building on its predecessor (CEWARN, CEWARN Strategy Framework Unpublished)¹. In its Strategic Plan, CEWARN has identified a number of challenges² it would wish to address in the next seven. Among these challenges, it identifies “lack of a systematic appreciation of gender dimensions of violent conflict with due sensitivity to the diversity of the region and its dynamics.” (CEWARN, CEWARN Strategy Framework Unpublished)³

¹ See CEWARN Strategy Framework (CEWARN, CEWARN Strategy Framework Unpublished)

² Ibid

³ These only represent the challenges we focus on in this research.

The Purpose of Gender in Conflict Early Warning

The role of gender in early warning goes beyond the mere need to gather accurate data, which in itself is a useful undertaking as a crucial part of any planning or decision making process. Any data gathering should be placed within a context in which the gender dimensions of the structural roots of conflict in society are identified in the first place and analyzed for inclusion in a process of early warning and the development of recommended actions.

There are two potential possibilities that can result from the consideration of gender-related factors in the analysis of structural roots of conflict. The first is that the inclusion of gender-related indicators in conflict early warning will derive from the specific issues of gender inequality within the target society, which have a potential to lead to conflict. The second possibility is that the root factor identified as a potential cause of conflict can become gendered in its manifestation.

Two questions are therefore crucial in the inclusion of gender indicators in early warning and each of these questions will invariably have regional and societal peculiarities:

- Direct linkage: Does the identified conflict issue result directly from a gender-related factor or root cause?
- Indirect linkage: Is the potential conflict itself the producer of a gendered impact?

Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez look at root causes that lead to conflict particularly; gender sensitive root causes. In an attempt to explain this, the authors identify three root causes namely lack of political equality, economic equality, and social equality. The authors argue, for instance, that research has shown that states with lower percentage of women in parliament are more likely to use military violence to settle disputes; the level of women's participation in the labor force can be interpreted as the extent to which women are integrated into the public sphere and other forms of participation; and finally high female fertility rate and lower gender equality increases the likelihood of conflict. However in their analysis, Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez fail to give a direct linkage between gender and root cause factors but have deduced from a range of principles and broad observations.

Additionally, these conclusions are difficult to apply in concrete ways to a region such as IGAD or specific African societies. One-size fits all approaches such as these are unlikely to produce accurate predictions about the likelihood of conflict. While some of the conclusions reached by Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez might be true, in many cases, they do not form a concrete basis for conflict early warning. Rather, they may serve in many instances as accurate indicators of development. This is one of the biggest challenges facing efforts to develop gender indicators.

Therefore, it is difficult to find gender indicators that have direct linkages to conflict causes. It is however easier to find indirect linkages when it comes to assessing manifestations and impact of conflict and conflict trends. Consequently this makes a case for a closer study of target regions and societies for analyses of direct and indirect linkages in ways that can produce more accurate gender indicators for conflict early warning.

Engendering Conflict Early Warning and Differentiating Between Conflict and Other Indicators

The IGAD region has been an area of focus for centuries globally in academia, policy and practice, due to its strategic location and its abundance in resources. Looking at culture, different authors concur that the IGAD region remains, both patriarchal and polygamous (see for example, Mtuku 2006). Daley, in *Gender and Genocide in Burundi* points out that the association of patriarchy and male dominance with conflict leads to the proliferation of violence against those considered socially vulnerable especially those lower down the gendered hierarchies (Daley 2006). Ero, while discussing *Security Sector Reform*, further explains that ‘...pre-existing inequalities and patterns of discrimination that women face on a day-to-day basis as a result of their marginalization and poverty are exacerbated during conflicts.’ (Ero 2011, p.34). From all these studies it is evident that there exists a gender gap in research, especially in conflict early warning, to which researchers ought to pay closer attention.

Further to this, studies carried out in refugee communities in the IGAD region point to a difference between men and women in the way they deal with trauma. The same way women experience trauma differently, is the same way they experience conflict, natural disaster and other issues differently. Due to the difference in their experiences, it is imperative to give them special consideration in any study in ways that are different from their male counterparts.

While looking at the gender dynamics of conflict in this region, it is important to incorporate other gendered identities that are rarely featured as part of vulnerable groups. In addition, it has been acknowledged that women are not always passive victims in the conflicts in this region but can also be perpetrators and even spoilers of the conflicts. Davies (2008) rightly states that ‘...while most women might be construed as peace loving, not all women are.’ It is therefore important to analyze the roles women play in conflict-both positively and negatively, and to look at other groups that fall victims to conflict and are often left out.

On CEW, Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez (2002) rightly provide the initial framework on how to engender early warning. They present their argument at two broad levels⁴: i) incorporating gender indicators in information collection and analysis; ii) incorporating gender analysis in response mechanisms. Regarding the collection of information, they posit that gender sensitive indicators should be included in early data collection and that women and women's organizations should be involved in the process as they are at the grassroots level. Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez base their argument on the stages of early warning which are: Collection of information using specific indicators; analysis of information; formulation of case scenarios and response options; communication to decision makers. Their argument throughout the paper is that gender balance should be reflected in all these stages Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez, here, tend to focus more on formalized organizations. However, they fail to note that women tend to rely on informal methods of communication particularly at the community level; and may not necessarily provide information willingly on conflict or such related matters when approached through their more formal organizations although these women often have the information needed.⁵

In an assessment of the impact of armed conflict on women, Sirleaf and Rehn argue that, 'Women have much to offer but their analysis is often devalued and their solutions deemed irrelevant. Because women are disconnected from what is considered 'high politics' and 'seats of power', there are few opportunities for information from and about them to inform preventive actions' (Sirleaf and Rehn 2002, Vol.1). Besides, because of the long culture of exclusion from political participation and decision-making matters, the idea of political participation does not always come naturally to women. Even when they have the freedom, they are reluctant to take up key positions. In an informal interactive dialogue, the UN Special Advisor on Genocide stated that⁶,

Conflicts do not emanate from mere differences but from inequalities reflected in Human rights violations: discrimination, marginalization, exclusion, dehumanization and denial of Fundamental rights. In genocidal situations, society is acutely divided between the in-group who enjoy the rights and dignity of citizenship, and the out-groups, who are excluded from enjoying fundamental rights and freedoms. It is often the out-groups reaction to these inequalities and counter reaction by the

⁴Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez base their argument on the stages of early warning which are: Collection of information using specific indicators; analysis of information; formulation of case scenarios and response options; communication to decision makers. Their argument throughout the paper is that gender balance should be reflected in all these stages.

⁵ For instance, women have merry-go-rounds that are not formal organizations, they are in church groups as well and in these groupings, they would not discuss conflict. So how then can these informal groups be used for data collection or as avenues to include security talks?

⁶ See (Deng 2011)<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/>

dominant groups that may provoke insurgencies and genocidal counter insurgencies.

This is the situation that continues to haunt most of the countries in the Horn of Africa (HoA). Interestingly, when this is seen from a gender perspective it becomes apparent that while women, like youth, constitute a significant proportion of the “out groups”, unlike youth, they rarely resort to violence.⁷ Others may however resort to violence in relation to issues affecting women, including for example, those seeking to limit the achievement of a change in the status of women across the board.

In most of the conflict prone areas in all the seven countries⁸ in this region, they are miles away from the countries’ capital[s]. The citizens of these countries do not in most cases feel the direct presence of the government. They have therefore developed their own mechanisms to protect themselves. They have, for example, taken on the states’ responsibility to monitor the borders. As such, the governments have lost touch and control of these areas and have ignored the conflict. They [the government] only bring it back to their attention when hundreds die. Borchgrevink and Lie support this statement by arguing that ‘The conflict prone character of the region stems in part from the weaknesses and failures of its states in terms of integrating and providing tangible benefits to all the groups living within their borders’ (Borchgrevink and Sande Lie 2009). To this extent, it is possible to argue that development indicators could be used to determine the probability of a conflict. This is however specific to some regions. With illiteracy for instance, the women are not sensitized about their rights and this would mean that women’s organizations at that level are very few if any. It would therefore be difficult to get first-hand information from women on the early warning indicators.

In the 2010 Ibrahim Index of African Governance Summary, most countries in the Horn ranked the lowest in Governance (Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2010).⁹ One of the key areas that are worth including in this piece is the National Security under Safety and the Rule of Law cluster. The Index first defines safety as, *the absence of conflict and its consequences*. They further break it down into (Ibid: p. 15-17):¹⁰

⁷One of the few exceptions being the Aba Women’s Riot of 1929 in Nigeria.

⁸ Countries in the IGAD region include; Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Sudan, Kenya and Uganda

⁹ The key governance indicators include; Safety and The Rule of Law; Participation and Human Rights; Sustainable Economic Opportunity and Human Development(which includes HIV/AIDS governance, Water and Sanitation Provision, Statistical Capacity and Gender)

¹⁰ The indicators identified are only those that resonate with the case of the Horn.

Domestic Armed Conflict-level of domestic armed conflict in a country or the likelihood of conflict developing in the near future; Battle Deaths- Civilians & Combatants more than 25 in a year resulting from war, minor conflict and non-state violence; Refugees originating from the country; IDPs within and outside the camps; International Tensions- Potential threat to a country's economic & political stability due to cross border tension.

This further re-iterates the point that development, governance and peace and security issues are inter-linked.¹¹

Looking at proximate causes and indicators, Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez argue that there are gender specific human rights violations that can be used as early warning indicators.¹² Indeed, according to Schmeidl, conflict is preceded by aggression. (Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez 2002, p.14) For example, domestic violence increases because women are kept away from the activities of the day and face violence if they dared ask questions about any abnormalities.¹³ But are there institutions set to deal with this, institutions where women can report suspicious behavior by their husbands and sometimes, even fathers? This may be too ambitious but it is perhaps an area in which grassroots organizations can be encouraged to provide a platform for its members to report. While CEWARN seeks to deal with the challenge of:

The analytical, communication and implementation capabilities of local and national institutions challenges to peace and in its efforts in ensuring that it operates most effectively (CEWARN; CEWARN Strategic framework Unpublished)

It could incorporate gender into its activities in CEWERUs for instance. This exercise might be made a periodic activity where they (the organizations) provide fortnightly updates. This will however depend on the level of trust these women have in the organizations.

Abrupt changes of gender roles too can result to conflict. When a shift in gender role in society occurs from more open to more closed ones, it may be a signal of a move to conflict. In addition it is important to have a firm cultural understanding to any response to

¹¹http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVQtkW8BY2I&feature=player_detailpage. This video too helped give a clear picture of the situation on the ground.

¹² These include gender specific violations including rape, domestic violence, and other forms of violence like bar fights, physical beating of men who refuse to take arms etc.

¹³ This came from interviews with an Alumna of the Peace and Security Fellowships for African Women at the African Leadership Centre August, 2012

women and conflict (USAID 2007).¹⁴ Therefore, while efforts have been made to ensure gender mainstreaming, it is important to be aware of cultures and analyze both existing and past gender roles. How best can we incorporate early warning into the cultures without eroding the communities' existing beliefs? Culture is a big part of every society.

Scrapping it and replacing it with contemporary ideas may lead to tensions and eventually conflict. (Mundy 2000). Countries in the Horn share cultures, social values emanating from centuries old traditions with Muslim, Christian and Animist Cultures. The political fate for each state is intertwined with its neighbours. In a meeting of the *Karamoja Cluster* in June 2010, all the countries in the cluster (Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda and Sudan) seemed to share the culture of blessing warriors before they took off to raid.¹⁵ Is it possible to have the women sing peaceful songs instead of mocking those who are not part of the raid? These cultures are also sure ways to tell when a conflict is looming. e.g. the community would expect a conflict before a marriage as the 'enemy' (the groom community) has to search for dowry for his bride. These have to be documented and formalized as credible early warning indicators if fit.

Further to this, the inadequate research that has been conducted on the gaps in EW has also made it clear that there exists a gap between traditional early warning mechanisms and the contemporary ones. Furthermore, the traditional CEW indicators that have long existed have not been documented. Most of the gendered aspects (considered micro-level factors) are tied to these traditional early warning mechanisms. Though some gender aspects in society change before, during and after a conflict, these changes go either unnoticed or ignored.¹⁶ Thereafter, the women and other vulnerable groups are often re-marginalized after the conflict (Campbell 2006, p.379)

Most women are involved in economic activities in the IGAD region. Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez argue that the sale of possessions by women would imply that a conflict is looming. This they support by rightly stating that war is costly and as the conflict comes close there is general desperation and need for money (Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez 2002, p.16). This

¹⁴ The report gives the example of Afghani women where NGOs started programs for women primary assistance. While households benefited some women complained that domestic violence increased. This is because NGOs ignored the cultural practice that men care for their families (USAID 2007, P.12-13). Also, the burning of Muslim books sparked weeks of protest in Afghanistan. This is to emphasize that culture can lead to conflict if not followed.

¹⁵ One of the activities in the meeting was a group activity where the women were asked to; ' explore women's perspectives on the causes of pastoralist conflicts in the Karamoja Cluster as well as the roles women play in conflict situations. (CEWARN, Enhancing Women's Role in Strengthening the Conflict Early Warning and Response Network in the Karamoja Cluster 2010)

¹⁶ Gender roles are for instance likely to change. Women would be forced to take up arms.

confirms that women are not always passive victims in the conflicts but can also be perpetrators and even spoilers of the conflicts (Wulf Herbert, and Tobias Debiel, 2009). But what can researchers pick from activities that take place during conflicts, paying close attention to gender? How can we use these activities as a basis to perhaps come up with indicators that are specific to gender? For instance, women who are in the economy (in the markets) would have an idea when arms are coming in and going out of the market. Also prices of certain commodities would rapidly rise and there would be 'different' commodities in the market like bullets.¹⁷

There are other ways to pass information; there is for instance gossip in the market and the women would therefore have a clue when there is a conflict.¹⁸ These activities, though very basic, are likely to form a basis to determine indicators specific to gender if formalized.

It has also been proposed that the portrayal of women in conflict by the media can be used as an indicator. The Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez use the example of Rwanda where Tutsi women were portrayed as seductresses, which in turn escalated the conflict leading to the killing of Tutsi women married to the Hutus (Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez 2002).¹⁹ This may not necessarily be the case for the HoA but it is a relevant component especially in this era of technology. Unfortunately some of these conflicts are barely covered by the media if at all. Most of the communities in the IGAD region are pastoralists and therefore not very much influenced by the media. But what would be the best way to adapt such a new technique? What media is popular and how best can it be maximized in this region? This would take us to the question raised earlier of mating traditional and contemporary methods of early warning.

This is also an opportunity to compare notes with other Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Southern African Development Community (SADC) for instance has the SADC Gender Protocol that is specific to gender and gender mainstreaming. What can be borrowed from them? There is for instance a section on the inclusion of the media (Morne and Nyakujarah 2011, p. 225).²³ This will be helpful to avoid duplication of activities and will be a good starting point for CEWARN in its efforts to ensure comprehensive Conflict Early Warning for the whole region. It would be good to look at other means of information

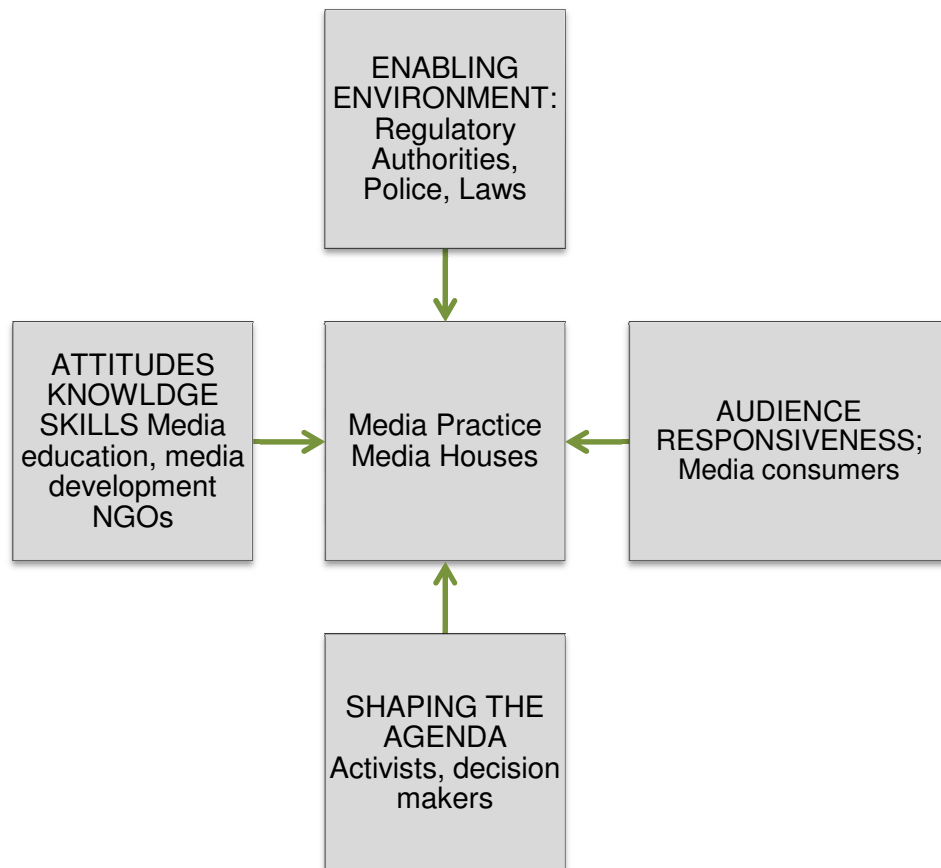
¹⁷ Among the behavioral aggravators that have been identified as early warning indicators in CEWARN are; livestock price sale increase, bullets as commodities, new markets etc. (Wulf and Debiel 2009, Appendix 2)

¹⁸ These communities have had this coexistence since time immemorial and have accepted it to be a norm.

¹⁹ Media scapegoating of women (Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez 2002); what the media portrays may either escalate or reduce the conflict.

sharing at that level e.g. stereotyping can be used to discriminate and could eventually lead to violence against a certain group. It is also passed from generation to generation. Stereotyping could also cause women to withhold certain information for fear of being discriminated against.²⁰

Figure 1: *Entry points for gender in the media* (Morne and Nyakujarah 2011,p.256)



These last few factors underscore the predominance in existing analysis, of indirect linkages between gender and structural causes of conflict. They are nonetheless important gender indicators, which would be worth taking into consideration in the CEWARN Mechanism. Perhaps more importantly, they emphasize the potentially gendered nature of the manifestations of conflict resulting from those root causes, which in turn serve as indicators of conflict. The real challenge with many of the indirect factors however is that these indicators manifest when violent conflict is imminent and it may be too late to respond.

²⁰ Bravery is marked by the number of cattle rustled, young girls want to get married to brave men and would not risk losing this by reporting their spouses to authorities. The Sudan group in the Karamoja Cluster meeting for instance stated that they regarded raiders as heroes and brave... mothers would

Responding to Indicators of Conflict Early

Warning

Once the indicators have been identified then the next challenge becomes how best to respond to the indicators identified. In an attempt to identify some of the different ways to include gender in Conflict Early Warning response mechanism, Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez talk of inclusion of micro-level factors in the responding to the indicators identified. This they support by arguing that including micro level indicators would automatically capture women.²¹

The authors further argue that inclusion of women in decision making and increasing their role in leadership in, say, the refugee camps would also impact positively on engendering CEW response mechanism. However, their inclusion only- may not work. The humanitarian mission[s] sent in-post conflict too should be gender sensitized. They should have more [trained] women in the mission too.²² Governments too should be involved in the effort to ensure gender mainstreaming. Other than the implementation of UNSCR 1325 only, Governments could for example practice Gender Budgeting as is the case in SADC.

(Morne and Nyakujarah 2011)²³ Global and regional initiatives tend to inform policy makers at the top level. Less attention is given to the strength and coping capacities at the local level; inappropriate inclusion of the local level leads to neglect of the dynamics of violence at the local, national, and trans-border interface and fails to strengthen local coping mechanisms against the outbreak of violence.

Additionally, key questions that ought to be discussed would be the “What?” and “When?” In a meeting of Government Experts on *Early Warning & Conflict Prevention* by the AU (African Union 2006), these questions were raised. The question of “what” has since been answered but the question of “when” remains very fluid. Most of the indicators in early warning are ‘last minute’ such that there would not be sufficient time for the government, policy makers to act. This in turn has an effect on the response systems in early warning. The question then remains of what indicators can be used to pre-determine a conflict long before it erupts.

²¹ ‘...Including micro level factors which lead to violence as opposed to solely focusing on state based structures and relations’ (Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez 2002, p.7)

²² This is again covered in CEWARN’s list of challenges as listed earlier.

²³ The protocol provides that State Parties shall ensure gender responsive budgeting at the micro and macro levels including tracking; monitoring and evaluation. See Morne and Nyakujarah 2011, p.116

Overall, an analysis of existing concepts and approaches indicates that there is no clear line between gender indicators and general conflict Early Warning indicators.²⁴ In some other instances, the indicators given are more of development indicators. The area of gender inclusion in conflict early warning has been under-researched and even those who have attempted to write on the same tend to often revert to development indicators or early warning indicators that are not specific to gender. As such, there is an obvious gap in the field. Nonetheless, in analyzing the limited research that has been conducted on the same, it is clear that there exists a gap between traditional early warning mechanisms and the contemporary ones. Additionally, the traditional CEW indicators have not been documented. This has led policy makers to ignore the micro-level factors that lead to conflict.

We can however draw some immediate conclusions from existing approaches, which will be useful in developing alternative approaches to the development of gender indicators for conflict early warning. These include, the following, for example:

- Culture plays an important role. Culture is a big part of every society. Scrapping it and replacing it with contemporary ideas may lead to tensions and eventually conflict. ‘...having the sensitivity to deal with culture needs the vision and confidence to apply rules and regulations with a light touch, recognizing and accommodating ideas which fall outside the confines of established criteria.’(Mundy 2000).
- There is a significant difference in the quality of direct and indirect linkages between gender and the root causes of conflict. Much of what exists in the literature and in proposed actions relates to the indirect factors.
- Timing determines the capacity to respond. The earlier the indicators are determined the higher the chance that the findings will bear fruit if acted upon.
- There is need to incorporate and document traditional indicators into the contemporary ones. It is evident that communities in the IGAD region, like other regions, have devised ways to predict conflict. Some may be very basic but it is

²⁴ In her summary of considerations for gender-sensitive response Schmeidl gives employment as one of them. Stating that, ‘unemployment of young men provides an open recruitment base for militias could lead to micro-level response to develop job creation’. But what about women who are not employed?

important to formalize them. Also, given the technology era, it is important to know how best to marry traditional and contemporary early warning indicators.

- There is need to build on what already exists in efforts to ensure gender mainstreaming by pulling forces together with National, Regional and International Organizations.
- It is important to take advantage of avenues that exist (e.g. media, grassroots organizations) to incorporate CEW with a positive bias to gender.
- In crafting a framework for developing gender indicators for the IGAD region, it is important to undertake a careful consideration of the regional and specific national contexts while also carefully identifying context specific issues that relate to the direct and indirect questions outlined in this paper.

Towards the Development of Gender Indicators in Cewarn Mechanism

Several ideas can be explored toward the development of gender indicators in CEWARN, which will bear relevance to the experiences of the IGAD region. The three-point proposal discussed here is a contribution in this regard. First, it is important to embark on a careful study of the gender dimensions of the causes and consequences of conflict in the IGAD region, with a view to including gender in early warning thinking and policy responses in the region. The efforts of Think Tanks and academic institutions should be directed to this agenda. Such efforts will be key to identifying relevant gender indicators that can be applied to conflict early warning in the region.

Second, the results of such a study or research projects in whatever forms they occur, will require a transfer into the world of policy practitioners for consideration and application. One idea in relation to this might be to establish a dedicated Working Group on this issue, led by CEWARN, consisting of academics and policy analysts and practitioners who can review and validate the results of such research and in turn make appropriate recommendations for the transfer of knowledge on this and related issues to the work of CEWARN.

Third, documenting these experiences in ways that the knowledge gained about the unique experiences of the region is preserved will serve as a significant contribution to future learning and practice in the region. It will also form the bases for the transfer of relevant knowledge across regions in Africa. An agenda that pursues these proposals and builds on them might offer a step toward building home-grown knowledge in Africa particularly on an issue that affects the continent where much is borrowed from outside.

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