Photo: UNDP/Su Sandi Htein Win

UN WOMEN

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING GENDER CONCEPTS IN MYANMAR FOR MORE INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING

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Introduction

Gender-transformative approaches are critical to addressing the underlying root causes of gender inequality. To use gender-transformative approaches effectively, it is important to understand gender terminology and concepts, since they are often used interchangeably, which can create confusion. A clear understanding of gender terms is particularly important in crisis and conflict settings, where gender inequality is often exacerbated.

Grasping these concepts is another step towards programming that acknowledges gender as a significant factor and form of power and influence. It involves recognizing and addressing power dynamics and inequalities based on gender, with a focus on achieving outcomes that equally benefit men, women, and gender-diverse persons.

This brief provides key concepts related to gender-transformative approaches, accompanied by examples to support organizations in Myanmar to apply them more confidently in their Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) programming.[1] It also highlights existing tools and

frameworks that organizations can use to examine whether a programme is gender-transformative.

Part 1: Breaking down key concepts

What is Gender Analysis?

Gender analysis, sometimes described as gender-sensitive or gender-responsive analysis, refers to analysis that applies a 'gender lens' to shine a light on gender (in)equalities and gender power dynamics.[2]

Gender analysis draws attention to socially constructed expectations, limitations, and differences imposed on women, men, girls and boys, and sexual and gender minorities, to understand how these relate to their specific status, needs, and experiences.[3] This analysis considers patriarchal power – where men hold more control – as part of a bigger picture of oppressive systems. It stresses the

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1. This brief is part of UN Women Myanmar's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Brief Series. It can be read alongside Myanmar WPS Brief: Advancing Women's Meaningful Participation in Peace and Security, which outlines concepts and practical actions for supporting and promoting women's meaningful participation. Briefs are available in Burmese and English.

2. See UN Women. 2022. Guidance Note: Gender-responsive conflict analysis. New York; UN Women. 2022. Handbook on gender mainstreaming for gender equality results. New York; Close, S., et al. 2020. Facilitation guide: gender sensitive conflict analysis. London: Conciliation Resources and Saferworld.
3. Buchanan, C. 2021. Gender-inclusive peacemaking: strategies for mediation practitioners. Mediation Practice Series. Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. Intersectionality was first advanced by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989, to understand how aspects of our identities (ethnicity, social class, sexuality, religion, gender, abilities) can intersect to make discrimination or disadvantages more complex. E.g. A woman from a marginalized ethnic group who lives with disability(ies) may experience three intertwined forms of oppression: sexism, racism and ableism. See Perlman, M. 2018. 'A short history of the term 'intersectionality.' Colombia Review of Journalism 23 October.

importance of understanding this alongside other kinds of power.

As well as ensuring data is disaggregated and analyzed by gender, in its simplest form gender analysis should consider:

Who is involved in data collection and analysis? Actively engaging a range of diverse actors including men, women, gender-diverse persons, youth, feminist researchers and civil society organizations in data collection and analysis helps ensure a broad range of perspectives are reflected in the final analysis.

Who is consulted? To clearly identify and address gender inequality dynamics, analysis must consider the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders – including from conflict-affected communities – while paying close attention to gender representation.

What data already exists? While consultation is critical, it is also important to draw on any relevant existing data and information produced by civil society organizations and Myanmar think-tanks and researchers. This ensures consultation builds on rather than duplicates existing data, and recognizes the ongoing work of Myanmar organizations.

By better understanding gender inequalities and power dynamics, gender analysis lays the foundation for programming that responds to the different needs of men, women, girls, boys and sexual and gender minorities.

Organizations that fail to conduct a gender analysis risk developing programming that either inadequately addresses the issues or inadvertently reinforces imbalances and harmful gender norms.

Gender-Responsive Conflict Analysis

Political and conflict analyses informing peacebuilding and political interventions often lack consideration of gender, which undermines the inclusiveness and effectiveness of these efforts. Therefore, in addition to the gender analysis outlined earlier, understanding the impact of conflict on gender dynamics is crucial for effective programming in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Gender-responsive conflict analysis (GRCA) involves examining how gender roles, norms, and inequalities intersect with conflict dynamics and impact the experiences of women, men, girls, and boys and gender diverse persons.[4]

A GRCA allows practitioners to closely examine conflict drivers and catalysts for peace as they relate to the gendered dynamics of the conflict. For example, if militarized public security is viewed as a conflict driver, a gender-responsive conflict analysis may ask:

- How do men, women, and gender-diverse persons experience, enforce or resist such violence?
- How do violence and militarization relate to societal perceptions and expectations of gender norms?

Awareness of these dynamics is relevant for post-war development and reconstruction, when violence can shift from large-scale conflict to criminal, social, and increased sexual and gender-based violence. In such transitions, the significance and role of militarized masculinities can diminish, leaving men struggling to fulfil their socially prescribed roles as 'natural' providers and leaders. Recognizing the links between militarized masculinities, which are most prevalent during conflict, and the entrenched social and structural inequalities that often exist before, during and after conflict, is essential to tackle the root causes of gender inequality and build sustainable peace.

4. UN Women. 2022. Guidance Note: Gender-responsive conflict analysis. New York.
5. Buchanan, C. and C. Williscroft. 2016. The Women are Ready: An opportunity to transform peace in Myanmar. Peace Support Fund. Yangon.

Gender-Responsive Programming

Gender-responsive programming refers to actions that enhance the capacity to practically address the gender (in)equalities, exclusions, and differences that have been identified by applying a 'gender lens'. Gender-responsive processes and outcomes can include laws, policies, programmes, and services that are designed and delivered in ways that tackle sexism and gender inequalities.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Gender-responsive actions should:
- Be feasible, monitored and evaluated to determine whether targeted inequalities are being reached.
- Incorporate feedback mechanisms from individuals and communities to ensure continuous improvement and adaptability to changing contexts.

Part 2: Putting gender transformative approaches into practice

The table on the following page outlines what programming can look like when it falls short of being gender transformative and, conversely, how programming can be improved to succeed in being gender transformative.

First, we provide a fictitious scenario of a typical situation faced by project staff.

MYANMAR SCENARIO

Saw Sai Oo is a project officer at a micro-finance NGO. The project is being implemented in five communities across Myanmar.

Part of Saw Sai Oo's role is to ensure the organization's programming is gender transformative and conflict sensitive, but it is not always clear to him what that means. Saw Sai tries to ensure half of all meeting participants are women, and most activities include women. He also dedicates a section of proposals and reporting to gender. He references the number of women the project tries to reach as beneficiaries and how women are often excluded from mainstream financing. From a conflict sensitive perspective, Saw Sai Oo includes a paragraph in his analysis on the political factors driving conflict in the region.

Saw Sai Oo thought this was a good mix of analysis and action. He thought he was being gender transformative with his approach. However, after reviewing his actions using the table below, he realized he needed to strengthen his efforts to work more effectively towards gender equality.

Photo: UNDP/Su Sandi Htein Win

Based on the scenario:

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→ WEAK GENDER ANALYSIS

Saw Sai Oo includes a general paragraph in proposals and reporting that notes some gender-disaggregated indicators such as life expectancy, maternal mortality, and gender balance in parliament. The text also notes women's marginalization from mainstream financing.

Saw Sai Oo includes a paragraph in the analysis on the political factors driving conflict and how this might impact project implementation.

+ LACK OF GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROGRAMMING

There is reference to women's representation in the project, but no clear goal is set, nor are there 'enabling measures,' which are practical actions to address barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment. Enabling measures can include boosting women's participation with 'use it or lose it' seats, gender-inclusive facilitation techniques, holding pre-meetings for women to have more time and exposure to concepts ahead of larger male-dominated meetings.

Additional measures to lower logistical barriers could include childcare costs, interpretation support, data for online activities, and more.

≠ GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE

A 'gender paragraph' does not provide Saw Sai Oo with enough understanding of the root causes of women's exclusion and gender inequalities. It is hard to work with this information and set goals in programming.

A paragraph on conflict fails to examine the relationship between market opportunities and conflict drivers and does not analyze gender inequalities. There is no analysis on how men, women and gender-diverse persons are impacted differently by the conflict, including the impact on their economic opportunities. It also does not examine how caregiving responsibilities for women increase during conflict and how this limits their ability to engage in economic activities.

A representation quota (numbers of women) is only the first step in addressing women's exclusion. Saw Sai Oo observes that the actual role of women in decision-making has not increased.

He realizes there are barriers preventing women from active participation, being prepared, and influencing decision making. Without 'enabling measures' women are often unable to attend meetings (for example, due to conflicting caregiving duties and lack of access to tech devices and internet). The women who have been able to attend were often invited at short notice and felt unprepared.

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→ THOROUGH GENDER ANALYSIS

Saw Sai Oo works with colleagues to develop regularly updated analysis which:

- Focuses on an inequality relevant to programming. For example, women's exclusion from decision-making.
- Looks at gendered trends in microfinancing and how the project understands these patterns.
- Examines the causes and forms of inequality. For example, patriarchal gender norms reinforcing women's exclusion such as gendered expectations around caregiving duties, narrow expectations of the roles for boys and men in village life, male-dominance in formal settings, and women's limited experiences in such settings and resulting lack of self-confidence.
- Identifies gendered conflict drivers. For example, Saw Sai Oo conducts a joint market-conflict assessment examining the overlap between conflict and market actors and helps illustrate how power dynamics impact the conflict and market context. This also reveals gender power dynamics related to who has access to and control over different resources/markets. The analysis examines patriarchal norms and identifies that a project solely focused on women would place them at risk.

+ GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROGRAMMING

This is programming that:

- Has quotas to ensure women's representation at 50%; or to a clear minimum standard such as 30-40%.
- Budgets to enable meaningful participation and 'enabling measures.' For example, by ensuring women have interpretation support, and childcare costs covered.
- Offers relevant programming support. For example, by developing and training meeting facilitators on inclusive facilitation techniques and organizing pre-meetings with women participants to help them feel well prepared.
- Places responsibility on with men to shift norms too, through evidence-based engagement on equitable caregiving.

= GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE

By bringing attention to women's exclusion and, importantly, deeply examining the key factors causing and perpetuating it, Saw Sai Oo realizes patriarchal gender norms and power dynamics still limit women's actual representation and participation in decision-making, even when they are 50% of meeting participants. His analysis also identifies the relationship between market opportunities and conflict drivers that impact men, women and gender-diverse persons differently.

To ensure gender-responsive programming, he targets the norms and power dynamics underpinning women's exclusion, including by carefully involving men and boys. Saw Sai Oo regularly monitors, evaluates, and adjusts these actions to ensure they have the intended impact and are not exacerbating conflict drivers.

Only then, when (gender-responsive) actions specifically address the inequalities highlighted by (gender-responsive) programming, can this project be considered gender transformative.

Photo: UN in Myanmar

Part 3: Tools for applying gender equality concepts

There are various tools to help organizations apply gender equality concepts in programming and processes.

Two tools are outlined below that provide guidance on how to enhance gender inclusion in programming:

1. Gender Results Effectiveness Scale
2. Beyond Consultations Tool

Tools like these can be used to drive insights and discussions. For example, an organization's leadership may first choose simple guides – such as the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale, outlined below – to help their staff gain confidence and become comfortable applying the concepts, before applying more detailed tools.

TOOLKIT

These two tools are introduced in the following pages. You can find out more and download detailed resources using these links:

1. GENDER RESULTS EFFECTIVENESS SCALE

This UNDP evaluation report explains how and why the report's evaluation team created the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale.

🔗 **Evaluation of UNDP contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment.**

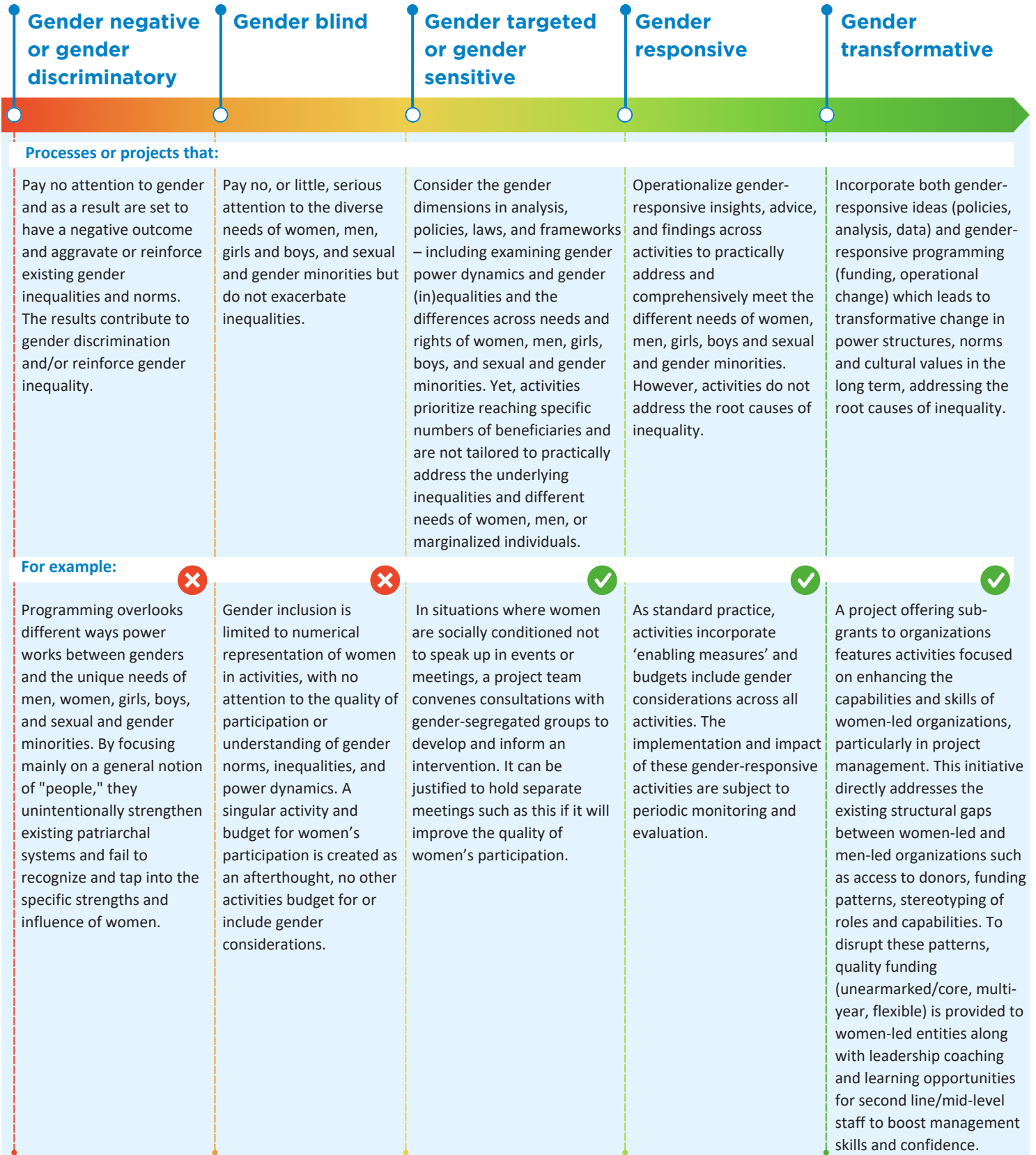### 2. BEYOND CONSULTATIONS TOOL

🔗 **Download the full tool in English, Spanish, French and Arabic.**

⚙ GENDER RESULTS EFFECTIVENESS SCALE

This is a scale to help organizations identify where their programming sits on a spectrum of being gender discriminatory through to being gender transformative. It provides a baseline and identifies how organizations can move their programming across the scale over time.[6]

Gender negative or gender discriminatory	Gender blind	Gender targeted or gender sensitive	Gender responsive	Gender transformative
Processes or projects that:				
Pay no attention to gender and as a result are set to have a negative outcome and aggravate or reinforce existing gender inequalities and norms. The results contribute to gender discrimination and/or reinforce gender inequality.	Pay no, or little, serious attention to the diverse needs of women, men, girls and boys, and sexual and gender minorities but do not exacerbate inequalities.	Consider the gender dimensions in analysis, policies, laws, and frameworks – including examining gender power dynamics and gender (in)equalities and the differences across needs and rights of women, men, girls, boys, and sexual and gender minorities. Yet, activities prioritize reaching specific numbers of beneficiaries and are not tailored to practically address the underlying inequalities and different needs of women, men, or marginalized individuals.	Operationalize gender-responsive insights, advice, and findings across activities to practically address and comprehensively meet the different needs of women, men, girls, boys and sexual and gender minorities. However, activities do not address the root causes of inequality.	Incorporate both gender-responsive ideas (policies, analysis, data) and gender-responsive programming (funding, operational change) which leads to transformative change in power structures, norms and cultural values in the long term, addressing the root causes of inequality.
For example: ❌	❌	✅	✅	✅
Programming overlooks different ways power works between genders and the unique needs of men, women, girls, boys, and sexual and gender minorities. By focusing mainly on a general notion of "people," they unintentionally strengthen existing patriarchal systems and fail to recognize and tap into the specific strengths and influence of women.	Gender inclusion is limited to numerical representation of women in activities, with no attention to the quality of participation or understanding of gender norms, inequalities, and power dynamics. A singular activity and budget for women's participation is created as an afterthought, no other activities budget for or include gender considerations.	In situations where women are socially conditioned not to speak up in events or meetings, a project team convenes consultations with gender-segregated groups to develop and inform an intervention. It can be justified to hold separate meetings such as this if it will improve the quality of women's participation.	As standard practice, activities incorporate 'enabling measures' and budgets include gender considerations across all activities. The implementation and impact of these gender-responsive activities are subject to periodic monitoring and evaluation.	A project offering sub-grants to organizations features activities focused on enhancing the capabilities and skills of women-led organizations, particularly in project management. This initiative directly addresses the existing structural gaps between women-led and men-led organizations such as access to donors, funding patterns, stereotyping of roles and capabilities. To disrupt these patterns, quality funding (unearmarked/core, multi-year, flexible) is provided to women-led entities along with leadership coaching and learning opportunities for second line/mid-level staff to boost management skills and confidence.

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6. UN Development Program. 2015. Evaluation of UNDP's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment. NYC: UNDP.

🛠️ BEYOND CONSULTATIONS TOOL

Another useful tool is "Beyond consultations: A tool for meaningfully engaging with women in fragile and conflict-affected states." This offers a systematic, step-by-step approach to improving the quality of consultations. The toolkit incorporates key principles for meaningful engagement (included below), as well as essential questions and a scoring system for implementation. While it was designed to enhance meaningful engagement with women and girls, it provides an approach that can be broadly applied to promote inclusion in various spaces.

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

The development of this tool was supported through a participatory research project with women and women's organisations from fragile and conflict affected states, as well as INGOs, government officials and representatives of multilateral agencies.

This participatory research outlined what meaningful consultation, engagement and participation looks like. Through this, the following principles to ensure meaningful engagement were developed:

1 All women have a **right** to meaningfully participate in **decisions that affect their lives.**

2 Women and women's organisations should be engaged as **equal partners** in the planning, design and implementation of decision-making processes.

3 Women should be supported to participate through a variety of appropriate, **context-specific methodologies**.

4 Women should be **supported, prepared and reimbursed** for their participation.

5 Women should be able to **set and shape agendas**.

6 Women's participation should be **representative of women in all their diversity**.

7 Participation should be **accessible**, ensuring women's access and resource needs are met

8 Participation should be **safe, empowering, respectful and not extractive**.

9 **Knowledge and learning** generated by consultations **should be shared** with the communities from which it was informed **on an ongoing basis**.

10 **Meaningful participation is not an end in itself** – women should experience **tangible benefits** through their engagement.

Resources

- Close, S., et al. 2020. Facilitation guide: gender sensitive conflict analysis. London: Conciliation Resources and Saferworld.

- Derbyshire, H., et al. 2018. Politically Informed Gender Aware Programming: Five Lessons from Practice. Briefing Note. Birmingham: Developmental Leadership Program.

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