Gender Issues and Development Aid in Conflict: An Introduction

"WE CAN'T HAVE PEACE WITHOUT DEVELOPMENT,

BUT DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT PEACE WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE EITHER"[1]

Development aid and/or assistance is the financial aid given to developing countries, mostly by Western industrialized countries, in support of their economic, environmental, social and political development. It focuses mainly on alleviating poverty and combating injustice in the long term, rather than providing a short term response to these countries' needs. Development aid, in its methodology and approach, has changed over the last few decades, moving away from the discipline of "modernising" post-colonial countries to integrating less economically developed countries into the global market. It has also adapted to changes ascertained in the economic and social theories, while in practice, development incorporates a wide variety of methodologies and theories, including humanitarian aid; emergency relief; governance; healthcare; education; gender equality; infrastructure; economics; human rights; environmental sustainability and other related issues.

Within this context, 189 world leaders made the historic promise to end poverty by 2015, at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000 when they signed the Millennium Declaration and agreed to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). "The eight **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions. They have galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest." Of these eight goals **the third (MDG3) refers to gender equality and women's empowerment** and it will serve as the scope of the present policy paper.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)	
Goal 1 **Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger** **Goal 2** **Achieve universal primary education** **Goal 3** **Promote gender equality and empower women** **Goal 4** **Reduce child mortality** **Goal 5** **Improve maternal health** **Goal 6** **Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases** **Goal 7** **Ensure environmental sustainability** **Goal 8** **Develop a global partnership for development**	*"Tackling poverty and hunger (MDG1) depends on improving access to decent work, particularly for women and young people, and on securing access to assets, including land. The MDG targets on health and education (MDGs 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6) cannot be met unless all girls have the chance to go to school and women's sexual and reproductive health and rights are addressed. Tackling child mortality (MDG4) depends on improving the status and well-being of women. Progress on combating HIV and AIDS (MDG6) requires recognition of how gender inequality and violence against women fuel the pandemic. Since women usually bear the burden of collecting water (MDG7), improving access to water is essential for enabling girls to attend school, and for women to be able to gain paid employment and participate in their communities. Progress on all of these goals underpins women's social and economic empowerment and access to decision-making at all levels (MDG3)[2]"*
Although gender is only specifically mentioned in MDG3 and MDG5, it has a huge impact on all of the Millennium Development Goals. However, very few development interventions focus on gender, whereas most of them do not take it into account at all.	

An important factor which negatively influences development is conflict. **MDG progress is seriously jeopardised by the insecurity caused by the multifaceted violence of conflict**. Additionally, insecurity and conflict form the primary reasons for the collapse of infrastructure, education, healthcare and agriculture development, while the development aid disintegration, in general, becomes much more difficult to administer.

The impact of conflict on women is a very serious issue. In recent years, war and violent conflict have affected more and more civilians and increasing numbers of women. **Women and girls are particularly vulnerable and require specific and tailored protection.** As many as 90% of casualties in present-day conflicts are among civilians, most of whom are women and children[3]. Sexual assault and exploitation are frequently employed as tools of war. Women are put under significant strain as designated care-givers delegated with looking after their families, while their husbands go to war, and they often turn to sexual exploitation in order to survive. Furthermore, women may act as armed combatants, thus they should not be treated as passive victims of conflict. Women are also subject to abduction and forced to act as "wives" to armed combatants, a role which involves domestic slavery and often sexual exploitation. In many cases this is obstructed by long-standing attitudes which classify soldiers as male, meaning women are not included in the disarmament process[4]. Post-conflict environments of poverty and insecurity also provide favourable conditions for trafficking[5], increasing the dangers faced by women refugees and survivors.
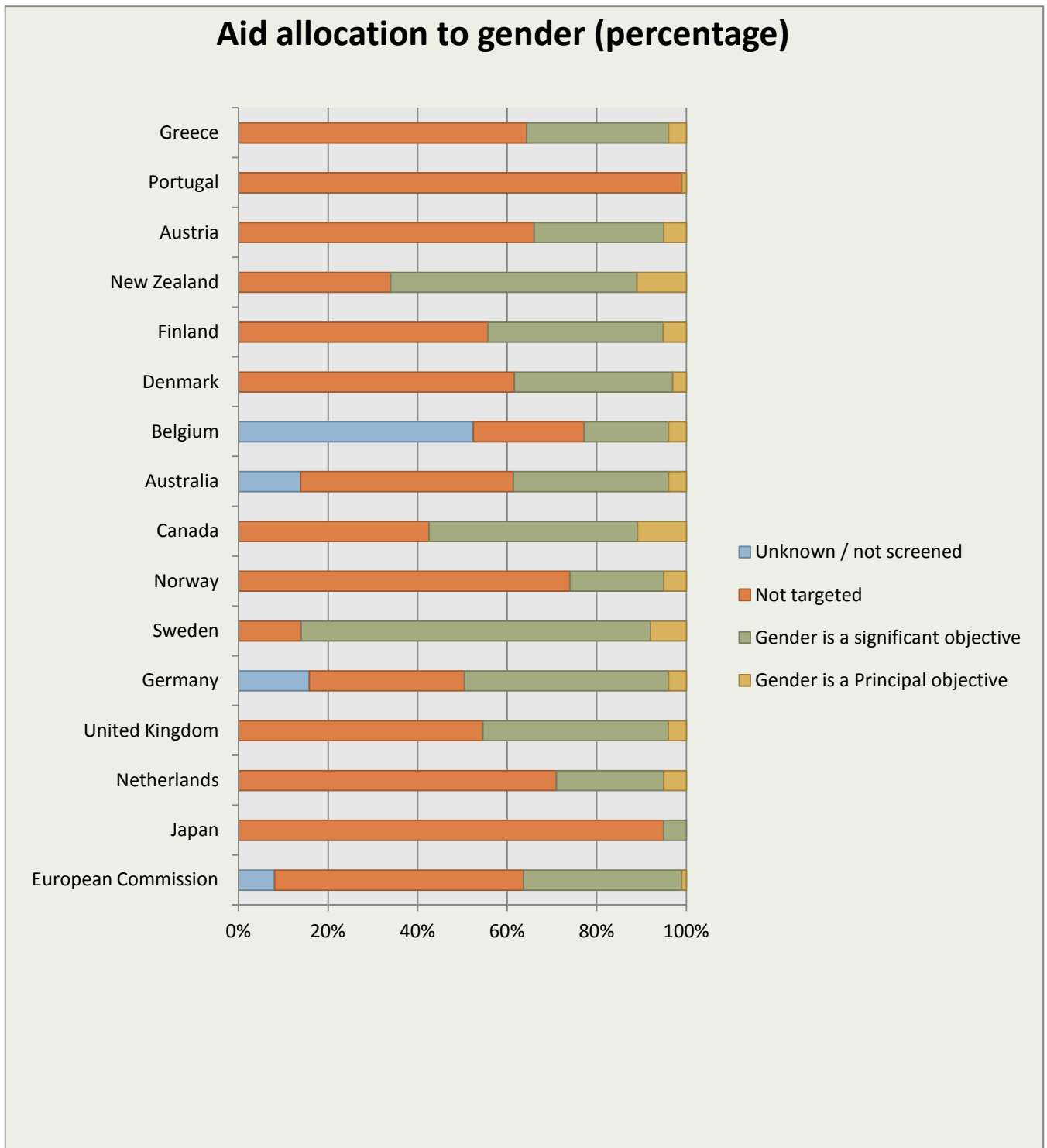
However, it is not just the physical impacts of conflict on women that are harmful. The lack of access to healthcare, particularly reproductive healthcare, has huge impacts on women during times of conflict. For women who have been victims of sexual violence, HIV infection is a serious risk, while unwanted pregnancies have physical and psychological implications, including stigmatisation and exclusion from having access to institutions such as education[6]. The psychological trauma experienced in times of conflict is also difficult to address and mental healthcare is pretty much absent.

Despite the presence of legal procedures and documents promoting women's empowerment and participation, including the Millennium Development Goal 3 (MDG3) which addresses gender equality, **women have been excluded from the development of a response to conflict**. Further taking into consideration the fact that after conflict there is an immediate need for reconstruction and the urgency for conflict relief and peace-building processes, gender issues are often shunned or delayed. On top of this, women are in almost all cases left out of the peace-building process, their contributions seen as auxiliary or relegated to non-formal spheres.

It is **of utmost importance that gender be addressed in every political intervention**, since ignoring it can have ramifications not just for women but for men and families (or children) as well. Taking the aforementioned issues into consideration, this paper will attempt to pinpoint some guidelines for CyprusAid's future contribution to development in conflict and post-conflict regions. CyprusAid is the Development Cooperation Service of the Republic of Cyprus, established in its current form by the Council of Ministers in 2005.

In the next few pages attention will be drawn to general and thematic policies which have been successfully employed by other EU member states in less developed countries across the globe, in the form of a "Gender in Conflict" guide. Next, a case study of one of CyprusAid's *Official Development Assistance* recipient countries will follow as a means to demonstrate how CyprusAid can implement this methodology. To finalize, some suggestions will be set out as to how Cyprus Aid can integrate MDG3 into its *Technical Assistance Scheme*.

Aid allocation to gender (percentage)

Greece
Portugal
Austria
New Zealand
Finland
Denmark
Belgium
Australia
Canada
Norway
Sweden
Germany
United Kingdom
Netherlands
Japan
European Commission

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

- Unknown / not screened
- Not targeted
- Gender is a significant objective
- Gender is a Principal objective

Conflict has massive implications on the effectiveness of development aid and huge impact on women and gender equality. In the same way that aid, security and trade are interdependent, women must be included

in economic, political and social aspects of conflict reconstruction. Gender equality should not be relegated to specific 'gender-based' interventions. While these are important, gender should be mainstreamed and considered within the context of all aspects of development, particularly at times of conflict.

Security Council Resolution No. 1325

The most significant tool CyprusAid can use in addressing MDG3 during times of conflict is the Security Council Resolution 1325 (SCR 1325), which was adopted during the Namibian Presidency of the UN Security Council in October 2000. It is a landmark within the legal and political framework that acknowledges the importance of the participation of women and the inclusion of gender issues in peace negotiations, humanitarian planning, peace-keeping operations, post-conflict reconstruction and governance[8].

The SCR 1325 contents can be divided into two categories:

(a) *The protection of women during and after conflict.*
It includes the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, as well as the prevention of violence against women through the promotion of women's rights, accountability and law enforcement.

(b) *The participation of women in peace-building and conflict resolution.*
It promotes the participation of women at all levels of decision-making, as well as the mainstreaming of gender issues in peace operations.[9]

It is important that CyprusAid addresses both of these categories throughout its development assistance process, providing care and services for women in and after conflict situations, and, more importantly, providing a role for women in the peace-building process.

In the following section, considerations are presented and suggested for use by CyprusAid in conflict situations, in its ODA (Overseas Development Aid) recipient countries, within the context of MDG3. This is not a blueprint that can be directly applied to each country, but rather a set of methods which will help CyprusAid develop and implement tailor made assistance programmes worldwide. That is, while certain parts of the document can serve as concrete courses of action in all instances of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction, research should also be conducted, specifically for each recipient country, prior to and during assistance programmes, so that the methodology may be adapted to specific situations and environments and thus be most effective.

Facts and Figures
• Up to 70% of women experience sexual or other violence in their lifetime.[10]
• In sub-Saharan Africa, 57% of those living with HIV are women, while young women aged 15 to 24 years are at least three times more prone to be infected than men of the same age.[11]
• Up to 2 million people are trafficked annually. Women and girls make up 80-98% of those

detected.[12]

- Women's participation in peace negotiations averages less than 8% of peace processes.[13]

- Out of 300 peace agreements in the last 20 years, only 18 have addressed sexual violence.[14]

- Although women spend about 70% of their unpaid time caring for family members, their contribution to the global economy remains invisible.[15]

"Gender in Conflict" areas for consideration.

Care and Attention to Women

Protection

Women experience conflict in a very different way than men. Consequently, **protecting women at times of conflict should be designed according to their specific needs, the risks they are faced with and the ways they are affected** by conflict and its outcomes. It is not a simple case of adapting pre-existing methods, rather a challenge to provide tailored but concrete and tangible protection to women.

An example of such protection to women is the creation of women's shelters or food aid programs that will ensure that women do not turn to sexual exploitation to feed themselves and their families. It is also vital that legal proceedings are devised so as to protect the rights and interests of women. This includes a prosecution system that brings to justice those who commit gender-based crimes such as rape and domestic violence. Additionally, it is imperative that both governments as well as the general population are educated on the severity and gravity of sexual violence. Peace operations personnel should also be trained on the rights of women, in order to enable them to take effective protection measures that can help guarantee the protection of women in refugee camps and war-torn areas[16].

Healthcare

In times of violence and unrest, it becomes particularly difficult for infrastructural services to remain effective, while healthcare is one of the vital services which is often disrupted completely. It is imperative that healthcare is provided to all refugees, displaced persons and survivors of conflict. In the case of women, it is even more important that reproductive healthcare is provided. With the proliferation of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly in conflict-stricken countries of Africa, **treatment for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases must be made available in a prompt and direct manner**. Equally important is the **provision of mental healthcare**, most often neglected as a form of healthcare and recovery treatment in conflict situations. The vast majority of victims of sexual violence suffer in silence and this does not aid recovery. It is important that women receive psychological help and treatment rapidly and thoroughly so that they can recover, be reinserted in society and become active agents in the reconstruction process. Similarly, the stigmatisation that victims of sexual abuse face needs to be stopped, as it further contributes

to their trauma, by providing them with the necessary support and empowerment so that they can regain their strength to find ways to cope.

Awareness Raising

Promoting gender equality is about **awareness raising and changing persisting mentalities and negative attitudes towards women**. To this end, **women** should **be empowered by being involved in the process**, while measures taken should be geared towards their needs. The process therefore entails liaising with local official structures, in order to enhance the status and profile of women in political and economic processes. Another central task is educating the general population about gender inequality and violence, in order to de-stigmatise victims of sexual violence, in particular those who suffer unwanted pregnancies or contract HIV/AIDS, as well as to prevent the continuation of such inequalities and violations of human rights. It should be noted that awareness raising and education on gender issues cannot appear patronising nor should it leave men feeling emasculated. It is therefore imperative that programs of campaigning and training are conceived locally and by local experts, carried out from the bottom up through grassroots organisations and groups.

Supporting Women to Claim their Role in Society

Understanding Women

> "THE FIRST PREREQUISITE IS TO LISTEN TO [WOMEN'S] OWN STORIES AND INTERPRETATIONS OF WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENTS OR TRANSFORMATIONS IN THEIR STATUS, AND WHY."[17]

Conflict situations have a dramatic impact on demographics; however this can potentially enhance the status of women by allowing them access to commercial and political life, traditionally held by men. The effects on women can, however, also be overwhelmingly negative, with increased gender disparities. Conflict can drastically alter status and gender roles. It is therefore imperative that, in the process of empowering women, CyprusAid seriously **take into account gender roles and the position that women held before the conflict, as well as the ways in which social relations have been affected**.

Achieving gender equality and empowerment of women is not a straightforward and/or a simple process. In seeking to achieve gender equality, it is imperative that the **focus be on the particular roles, needs and vulnerabilities of women in environments of conflict**, so that interventions are appropriate and effective. Furthermore, a meaningful and reciprocal dialogue must be established between CyprusAid and its beneficiaries. This can be achieved through research and direct input from local women, as well as partnerships with local women's organisations. Participation should be highlighted at all stages of programme planning and implementation, while participants should represent all levels of society, not solely the elite.

Economic Integration

In general, **women in the least developed countries do not have the same access to the formal economy as men.** While the informal economy, such as petty trading in arts and crafts, is often encouraged by development agencies, the formal economy such as agriculture or official access to the market provides significantly more stability to women, especially to those supporting families.

A factor that has significant repercussions is whether or not women have a legal right to land owning. Customary laws regarding inheritance and property frequently have unfavourable provisions for women, which limits their access to property which in turn precludes the opportunity for a reliable and regular income, regardless of whether that is based on agriculture or trading[18].

It should be kept in mind, both with a focus on economic integration and with a general view, that any intervention or change in the system can have long-term and enduring consequences. **If economic integration focuses on marginal and small-scale activities, for which there is little or no sustainable market, the projects will not reduce the vulnerability of women nor help them to be self-sufficient.** For instance, arts and crafts projects which have been used in the past as a gender-oriented development tool may not be the best course of action[19]. The local relevance and sustainability of a project are key. Similarly, a naïve view should be avoided, as in fact, **education and training do not automatically lead to employment, while in many countries, the level of education among women is high but economic activity is low**. Factors such as traditional ideals about the roles women "should" hold in society must be taken into account and official channels must be used to integrate women into the formal economy.

Political Activity

> "THE TERM 'POLITICAL' HAS BEEN LARGELY DEFINED BY MEN. WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES IN COMMUNITY OR CHURCH GROUPS, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE OFTEN LABELLED 'VOLUNTEER', 'CHARITABLE', OR 'SOCIAL' EVEN THOUGH THEY HAVE A POLITICAL IMPACT"[20]

Women's participation in political decision-making is explicitly stated and promoted in the third Millennium Development Goal. However, new and fledgling governments may be wary of activity which could be seen to compromise their interests in the initial period of state building. For this reason, among others, **fixing a quota for women is not an effective or stand-alone method of integrating women into political activity**. While quotas may ensure that women are put into positions within government departments, this is often criticized as tokenism which leaves women with no real influence. What must be done alongside quota setting is, on the one hand training and education of women and government personnel and, on the other hand an effort to promote women's participation in official fora and other organizations and to **emphasize women's "non-formal" political contributions and their demonstrated effectiveness in official positions and society at large.**

Local Partnerships

When building future policy, it is of the utmost importance that CyprusAid liaises with local people, organisations and experts. Empowerment cannot be a top-down process. It is therefore advisable for CyprusAid to team up with local organisations and implementers, as well as international actors. Local **partners, such as grassroots organisations and small-scale initiatives, have a more in depth knowledge of local society** and of the types of interventions that might likely be most effective and least harmful. Thus, encouraging NGOs and organisations in Cyprus to create links and relationships with those in CyprusAid's Overseas Development Assistance and Technical Assistance Scheme countries would help achieve this. The effectiveness of making local partnerships can be enhanced by incorporating Cypriot NGOs and organisations into the process, as **they have experience in working at a grassroots level and can have an important role in the development of a productive dialogue with local actors**, so as to take sustainable measures in the host country. Any intervention must be carefully conceived and implemented so that unintended and negative effects can be mitigated.

Capacity Building

An initial step to integrating women into economic and political activity is building the necessary capabilities within government departments, administrative systems and non-governmental organisations. This may take the form of training and education in gender issues for staff of local organisations, or establishing various programs for skill-building. **The core of capacity building, however, is creating an environment where women's participation can occur and where there are appropriate policies and frameworks to promote such participation.** Another aspect of capacity building concerns the protection of women, thus it should ensure that there are legal frameworks and processes to protect the rights of women, strengthen women's rights under national law and establish legal tools against sexual violence so that it does not go unpunished.[21] To this end, international partnerships would be particularly important, both with local organisations and with global ones, who have the expertise and experience to help facilitate capacity building.

Accountability

Alongside with promoting participation from the various actors and encouraging input from the beneficiaries for every initiative, both in policy-making and in implementation, it is advisable that CyprusAid cultivates a high level of accountability throughout all its programmes. **Accountability involves not only policy makers and donors but the beneficiaries as well.** Furthermore, accountability needs to be expressed within a long-term outlook of actions as relief and/or reconstruction measures should also take into consideration the long-term effects and outcomes that they bring about, both before and during the implementation stage. They should encompass, for example, at every step, **a continued promotion of gender equality**, as well as to ensure that women's and disadvantaged groups' roles are enhanced throughout the process.

CyprusAid: *Official Development Assistance*

Recipient Countries of CyprusAid's Official Development Assistance	
Autonomous Palestinian Territories	Egypt
Lebanon	Lesotho
Mali	Yemen

CyprusAid is already making contributions which fulfil the MDG3 in several of its ODA projects, as follows: in Egypt the *Early Childhood Education Enhancement;* in Lesotho the *Construction of a Boarding House for Girls*; in Yemen the *Emergency Obstetric Care Project* and *Support of Reproductive Health*; and in the Autonomous Palestinian Territories the *Protracted Relief Operation for Non-Refugees* which in its remit caters for vulnerable groups including pregnant women. Although this is a good start, a lot more can be done to address gender equality across CyprusAid's programmes, not only in specifically gender-oriented interventions, but in all development activity in which CyprusAid takes part. It is also important that existing and continuous programmes are assessed under the new policy to ensure that they are or have been effective. **Gender as a social issue must be considered in all facets of development.**

Detailed material on gender issues in every CyprusAid ODA country is not within the scope of this paper, however at this stage it is pertinent to point out the value that would be gained from conducting in-depth gender research at all stages of planning and implementation. Additionally, using secondary source material for policy-making is important in reducing the potential subjectivities of a researcher, as these materials cannot be entirely relied on, when dramatic changes can occur very rapidly in a situation, especially in situations of conflict which are unstable and volatile. Consequently, **continuous analysis and reflection is necessary in order to mitigate out-dated actions and results.**

Autonomous Palestinian Territories: a Case Study

The situation for women in the Autonomous Palestinian Territories is assessed in the charts below. The Autonomous Palestinian Territory is a region which has experienced prolonged conflict and continued tension in recent years; a situation which is specific and country-oriented and cannot be applied as a blue-print to any other country. However it serves as a good example and a basis for reflexion for issues dealt with in other recipient countries and actions taken to counter location-specific problems.

A Case Study: Autonomous Palestinian Territories

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	Victims of Physical Violence by Spouse	Victims of Psychological Violence by Spouse	Illiteracy among over 15 year olds	Employment Rate
% of Women	23.3%	61.7%	8.7%	15.2%
% of Men	9.5%	29.9%	2.6%	66.8%
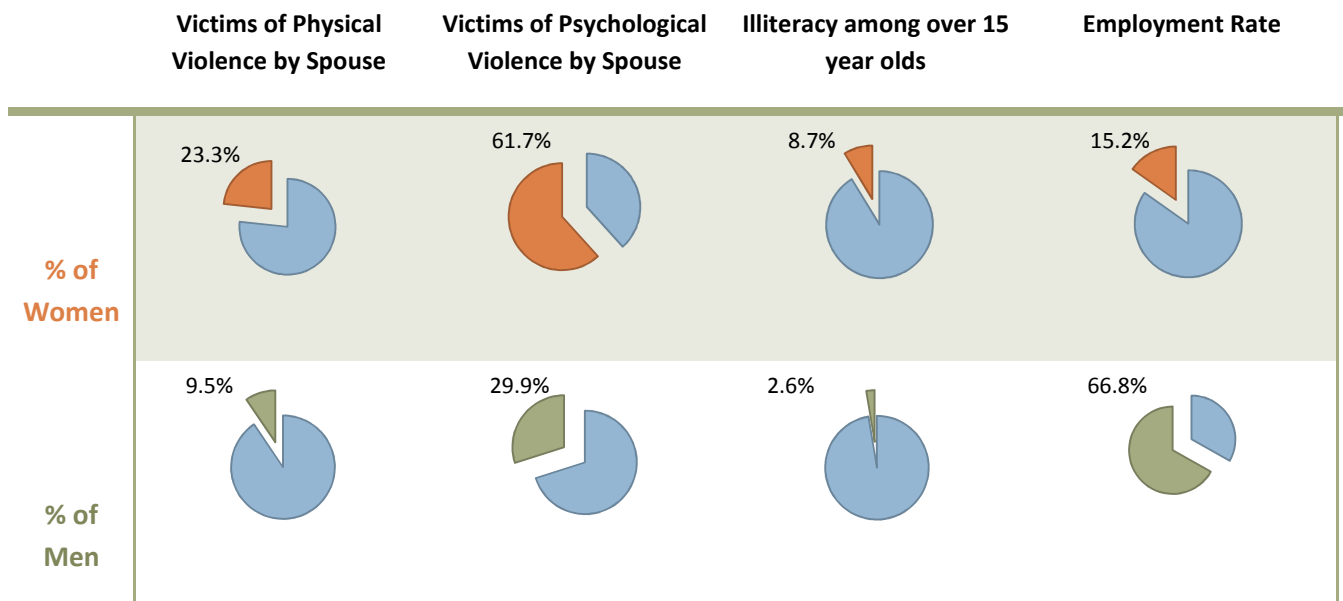
CyprusAid's main contribution in terms of ODA assistance has been the ***Protracted Relief Operation for Non-Refugees***, partnered with the World Food Programme (WFP)[23]. CyprusAid's description of the project notes that food was distributed to vulnerable groups, including pregnant women. However it does not address gender issues in a broader sense.

For example, the WFP has a policy with regards to the delivery of food aid, according to which food is directly distributed among women rather than men, as women's maternal instincts make them more likely to share with their families and children, rather than their husbands[1]. While this is empowering for many women and makes sense in contexts such as the ATP, since the majority of agricultural workers are women, it is not a straightforwardly effective policy. In some contexts where food aid and microcredit have been directed towards women, rates of domestic violence have risen, as men feel emasculated, their role as household heads seen as endangered, and thus, they try to regain control of the situation[24]. Considering the indicators on domestic psychological, physical and sexual violence in the ATPs, this kind of factor must be seriously considered when conceiving of and implementing aid. **Understanding territory specificities**, such as for example traditional value systems, can help increase program implementation effectiveness, while awareness raising campaigns or other education programs detailed in the report can be reinforced. This is also the reason why such programmes should be carried out with input from local partners, in order to aid local people and facilitate processes in a culturally sensitive region.

The most distinctive divide in the ATPs, in terms of gender equality, is the **economic disparity**. Despite being, for the most part, highly educated and in many cases politically vocal, women's presence in the labour force and their access to economic activity is far from satisfactory and needs to be addressed[25]. This is of particular importance and must be carried out with extreme sensitivity with regards to the ongoing situation with Israel. Persisting issues to be considered are the following: women who have lost their husbands due to the conflict are put under particular strain to become the breadwinner and provide for their household;

there has been a continuous labour crisis in the region for both men and women; restrictions have meant that imports of food have slowed, thus creating increasing food insecurity[1]; blockades, such as the West Bank barrier, have meant that many people have lost access to their land and other vital resources; finally, as with any other conflict situations, maintaining good international relations is also another challenge.

The very **low rate of women's participation in economic activity has been accounted to the structural limitations of the economy rather than the ideological or cultural inhibitions in the ATPs**. Literacy rate among women is very high and female university graduates make up 59.2 per cent of the total. However, what can be seen is that this is not the case where extra training and education would boost women's participation in the formal economy. Alongside the economic participation, the political participation of women is mostly informal. While women are reasonably politically involved, **their role is treated as peripheral to official processes**. Women's political movement should be encouraged and brought to the fore, so as to have substantial contributions to social and political development in the region.

Access to healthcare in the ATPs is gender neutral, except for healthcare which addresses maternal and children's health; women's health is addressed only in relation to their reproductive years, which stresses women's role as reproducers[26]. While there are laws addressing issues of rape, abortion and adultery, there is a large gap in terms of mental and emotional healthcare, both in relation to sexual violence and in general. Development assistance which focuses on mental healthcare is therefore of utmost importance and must be emphasised, along with general healthcare which views women outside of their role as mothers.

Finally, in order to utilise the MDG3 suggestions to their full potential and to provide what is most needed in the ATPs, local partnerships and relationships should be fostered. Effort should be invested in choosing and approaching some of the many organisations in the ATPs both for research and implementation purposes, as well as fostering relationships with local and Cypriot organisations. Examples of such organisations are mentioned below.

NGOs in the ATPs:

Palestinian Women's Research & Documentation Center
www.pwrdc.ps

A research and resource center exploring and providing information related to the situation of Palestinian women for use by governmental, international and civil society organisations, media and research institutions. They specify in their mission their advocacy for and promotion of gender equality.

Bat Shalom
http://www.batshalom.org

A grassroots organisation of Jewish and Palestinian Israeli women. They are working towards peace grounded in a just resolution of the conflict, with a focus on human rights and an equal voice for Jewish and Arab women.

Jerusalem Center for Women
http://www.j-c-w.org/

JCW is a Palestinian women's center located in East Jerusalem. Already in partnership with Bat Shalom, JCW works towards conflict resolution through the advancement of women's rights, the education and

encouragement of women in community activism and politics and developing women's roles in society, nation building and the peace process.

NGOs in Cyprus

NGO Support Centre
www.ngo-sc.org

Contributes with the provision of research and analysis at grassroots level with a number of Palestinian NGOs, to determine the effectiveness of joint cooperation programmes with Israeli / Palestinian NGO's. Working towards conflict resolution with NGOs in Bethlehem, Hebron and Jerusalem.

Future Worlds Centre
www.futureworldscenter.org

Enhances the capacity of CSOs to act within their community and on a national as well as a transnational level and actively engages civil society actors from Israel and Palestine to collaborate on jointly developed community action projects that aim to foster mutual understanding.

CyprusAid: *Technical Assistance Scheme*

CyprusAid's Technical Assistance – Scholarship Recipient Countries
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Bangladesh
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Gambia
Georgia
Indonesia
Iran
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Moldova
Pakistan
Sudan
Tajikistan
Uzbekistan

CyprusAid's *Technical Assistance Scheme for Foreign Countries* may be considered a positive initiative, utilising Cypriot expertise in economic transition and development.[27] This should continue, while efforts should be made for further aligning issues of conflict and gender. **Cyprus, having experienced a relatively recent conflict, and having evolved from an aid recipient to an aid donor country in the wake of this conflict, has ample expertise in economic and social revival.** This expertise could prove to be very useful in achieving gender sensitive policy and practice in CyprusAid's present and future projects.

CyprusAid could also do more to encourage and promote the accumulation of expertise in gender equality in Cyprus itself. **Cyprus ranked 86th in the 2010 Global Gender Gap Report and it represents the highest gender gap among the European member states (EU27).**[28] Applying many of the policies outlined in the MDG3 report to the Cypriot society could foster further understanding of gender inequality, as well as how equality could be achieved, both on a local as well as on a global scale. Consequently, that would enable CyprusAid to give more apt and experienced assistance to its recipient countries. For example, integrating more women into parliament and ministerial positions would increase the representation of women in Cyprus and also serve as an incentive for these women to be involved in policy-making and the implementation of CyprusAid schemes in locations worldwide.

The framework of the *Technical Assistance Scheme for Foreign Countries* includes **CyprusAid's scholarship scheme**. While this addresses areas of study in which Cyprus has accumulated expertise (i.e. Tourism, Services, Management, etc.) it could be **broadened to include studies linked to conflict resolution, peace keeping and post-conflict reconstruction**.

Conclusion

> **"WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND THEIR FULL PARTICIPATION ON THE BASIS OF EQUALITY IN ALL SPHERES OF SOCIETY … ARE FUNDAMENTAL FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE."[29]**

Conflict affects women profoundly, in multifaceted and severe ways. However, as **women are instrumental in post-conflict reconstruction and in peacekeeping, even vital in preventing conflict at the initial stages**[30], it is imperative that the impacts of conflict on women be addressed. Women need to be protected from gender-based violence, as well as from any other threats and their fundamental rights need to be safeguarded. Furthermore, women must be given the opportunity to participate in all aspects of development. Therefore, the main course of action for increasing women's roles in conflict, is bringing women's actions and input into official public and political spheres so that it is given the necessary status and emphasis. Having this outcome in mind, the present policy proposal recommends implementing the *Gender in Conflict* methodology, with a vision to protect and promote women's rights during times of conflict and violence.

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About the NGO Support Centre

The NGO Support Centre is a non-governmental organisation, formed in 1999, to support the development of an emerging civil society, providing assistance and resources to NGOs so that they may take their role as full partners in the socio-economic development of Cyprus. The Centre contributes to increasing the capacity of NGOs by providing technical assistance and training and by promoting dialogue between civil society organisations and with international institutions. The NGO Support Centre also implements projects dedicated to the strengthening of civil society in fields of conflict resolution, gender equality, human rights and development cooperation both locally and internationally. This policy paper is published by the NGO Support Centre within the framework of the EuropeAid funded project «Knowledge Makes Change! Strong cooperation between NGOs and academics in promoting development among politicians and public», which the Centre currently manages in cooperation with Polish Humanitarian Action and Pontis Foundation in Slovakia.

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