More than 1.5 billion people worldwide live in areas plagued by violence and conflict. The World Bank Group identifies support to fragile and conflict-affected states (FCS) as a strategic priority, critical to achieving its mission of reducing poverty and increasing shared prosperity. Gender issues merit special attention because of the different needs, coping strategies, and challenges for women versus men. But more often than not, women are affected disproportionately by violence and its aftermath.

An evaluation by the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) of the Bank Group’s support to FCS found more attention is needed to address the effects of conflict-related violence against women and economic empowerment projects for them during reconstruction. It offers insights from evaluative evidence to assist development practitioners within the Bank Group who design strategies and projects with potential remedies for more immediate, as well as long-standing, violence and discrimination against women.

This brief on how the World Bank Group can better meet the needs of women in fragile and conflict-affected states is based on a report by the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) entitled, World Bank Group Assistance to Low-Income Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: An Independent Evaluation. In Chapter 7, Bank Group engagement on gender issues is analyzed at two levels: treatment of gender at the country strategy level and focus on gender at the project level.

### Background

More than 1.5 billion people worldwide live in areas plagued by violence and conflict. The World Bank Group identifies support to fragile and conflict-affected states (FCS) as a strategic priority, critical to achieving its mission of reducing poverty and increasing shared prosperity. Gender issues merit special attention because of the different needs, coping strategies, and challenges for women versus men. But more often than not, women are affected disproportionately by violence and its aftermath.

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### Key Takeaways

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<td>Assessing the nature, dynamics, and impact of conflict on women should be integrated into framing a country strategy to help prevent and mitigate adverse effects.</td>
<td>Increasing women’s involvement in post-conflict efforts, such as peace processes, can lead to more effective program design and implementation.</td>
<td>Collecting women-disaggregated data is key for monitoring program indicators, outputs, and outcomes as well as measuring results.</td>
<td>Targeting female-headed households is crucial for income generation, employment, and human development programs after the conflict ends.</td>
<td>Overcoming the effects of violence requires projects that prioritize services for medical and psychosocial conditions and legal, education, and livelihood needs.</td>
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### Insights

The nature of gender-based discrimination and violence can determine whether a country assistance strategy should include projects targeted toward women or rely on gender mainstreaming to address relevant issues. For example, the poor legal and social status for women in some countries exacerbates their vulnerability when a conflict occurs.

Research by the Women, Business, and the Law Project of the International Finance Corporation and the Bank Group shows that in several FCS, married women cannot open a bank account, get a job, or register a business in the same way as married men. And several
Where to Start

Country-specific gender analysis is a good starting point to assess inequities imposed by social customs and legal systems as well as challenges made worse by conflict and instability. Findings will guide country strategy and programming. Development practitioners can incorporate them into strategies that recognize disparities and include operational commitments for targeted projects. While potential remedies can be mainstreamed into the country strategy, sometimes targeted aid projects may be necessary. A gender-sensitive framework to monitor projects can lead the way.

When designing a country strategy consider

- Does the strategy recognize and address gender disparities?
- Are commitments to address them translated into operational programs?
- Has gender been sufficiently integrated across cross-cutting themes?
- Have programs been designed to address women targeted by conflict?
- Has gender-based legal discrimination in the country been addressed?
- How do gender assessments impact programming and dialogue?

When designing programs ask

- Does program development incorporate analytical work, country strategy direction, and post-conflict needs on the ground?
- Do projects track gender-based outputs such as female representation in local- and national-level councils, training programs, and roles as service-delivery agents for programs?
- Are economic empowerment programs targeting female-headed households and tracking income effects?
- Do projects track gender-based outcomes such as the share of women in decision-making roles in public and political offices?
- Do post-conflict projects, including reconciliation, reparation, and economic and social development, involve more women?
- Are human development projects more conflict-sensitive and responsive to special gender-relevant needs?

More Resources

- The online Violence Against Women and Girls Resource Guide offers basic information, including operational implications, and guidance on prevention and quality services within a range of development projects.
- The Women, Business, and the Law Project of the World Bank Group presents indicators based on laws and regulations affecting women’s prospects as entrepreneurs and employees.
- The Fragility, Conflict and Violence website captures World Bank activities, including gender-based projects and operational documents.