

Addressing Chronic Violence from a Gendered Perspective

Fostering People-Centered Approaches at the National Level

Executive Summary

Violence has traditionally been viewed through the lens of armed conflict or specific, concrete violent incidents. However, it is necessary to understand that violence may be a chronic phenomenon— a persistent, deeply ingrained aggression affecting daily lives. Chronic violence, as conceptualized in the work of authors including Tani Adams and Jenny Pearce, is embedded in societal structures, often perpetuated by socio-economic disparities, political instability and cultural norms.

This report contributes to the study of chronic violence in three distinct ways: this research centers gendered experiences and perspectives on chronic violence; the findings are based on the insights and research of authors living in contexts experiencing chronic violence; and the report focuses primarily on the connection between national- and international-level policies and frameworks to address chronic violence. Women and marginalized gender groups experience a particular type of chronic violence, stemming from deeply rooted patriarchal structures. These experiences, while diverse, share a common thread: they are manifestations of systemic oppression and inequality, from domestic violence to broader societal discrimination.

The report makes the case for reconceptualizing violence in the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and gender equality fields, building upon feminist conceptions of the continuum of violence to recognize that societal structures, systemic discrimination and even pervasive cultural norms can be sources of violence. This comprehensive view has significant implications for policy, demanding multisectoral strategies that address not just symptoms but the root causes. This report illuminates the pervasive issue of chronic violence, especially its gendered dimensions, and advocates for comprehensive approaches to understanding and addressing it. Multidimensional strategies, inclusive policies and a global commitment are needed to elevate women's roles across sectors, from community development to high-level peace negotiations. Understanding the deep intricacies of violence can serve as the bedrock for constructing sustainable, equitable peace.

The analysis presented here reveals the following key findings:

- **Chronic violence is pervasive and endemic, not episodic.**
- **Chronic violence affects women and LGBTQ+ people in distinct ways.**
- **A nuanced understanding of violence is necessary.**
- **Women are key actors in addressing chronic violence.**
- **Holistic, people-centered approaches at the international, national and local levels are imperative.**

The following recommendations for international organizations, funders and national governments are based on this evidence and analysis:

● Recommendations for international organizations and funders in the peacebuilding field

- Expand programming and funding to address violence even in communities that are not considered to be experiencing armed conflict, recognizing the gendered reality of chronic violence.
- Explicitly consider gender and intersectionality when creating programs to address chronic violence to ensure that the programs are not reproducing gender and intersectional inequalities.
- Develop an internal mechanism to evaluate, monitor and ensure that the international organization/funder does not perpetuate chronic violence through its actions.
- Explicitly consider violence as a continuum when creating programs to address violence, focusing on everyday, normalized forms of violence, more lethal forms of violence and the social and cultural norms that contribute to the normalization.
- Ensure that women-led organizations are included as partners in programming to address chronic violence.
- Ensure continuous monitoring and evaluation of the integration of international frameworks relevant to chronic violence into national policy and programming.
- Establish learning mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of integrating international frameworks relevant to chronic violence into national strategies, addressing gendered chronic violence.

● Recommendations for international organizations and funders in the WPS and gender equality fields

- Include countries and communities experiencing chronic violence when considering sites for programming and funding.
- Expand funding for research and programming related to gendered chronic violence.
- Recognize the role of women in addressing chronic violence and provide support to community-level organizations and individuals working to prevent and mitigate violence.
- Include women who are addressing chronic violence in networks, programs and other opportunities focused on women peacebuilders.

Recommendations for national governments

- Recognize the interconnectedness of forms of violence and the expansive nature of gendered chronic violence.
- Incorporate a broad definition of gender-based violence, as outlined in CEDAW's General Recommendations, into national and legal frameworks.
- Develop and implement comprehensive national action plans in collaboration with civil society groups to specifically address gendered chronic violence. Ensure implementation of national policies in a way that is aligned with international standards.
- Ensure that these policies address the diverse experiences of women, using an intersectional approach.
- Draft and implement legislation that upholds the rights of women and people of marginalized genders.
- Engage closely with community- and municipal-level stakeholders to design, implement and monitor policies and programs addressing chronic violence.
- Ensure that justice mechanisms are accessible, survivor-centered and free from discrimination and bias.
- Train legal professionals on the nuances of gendered chronic violence and its multi-dimensional nature.
- Establish support systems for survivors of violence through programs such as crisis centers, helplines or long-term support groups.
- Create mechanisms for feedback and monitoring of policies and programming that address chronic violence in collaboration with civil society groups.
- Create public spaces that are safe for everyone, irrespective of their gender.
- Facilitate dialogue between citizens and authorities to (re)design policies focused on community safety.

About

The Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice (Kroc IPJ) launched in 2001 with a vision of active peacebuilding. In 2007, the Kroc IPJ became part of the newly established Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, a global hub for peacebuilding and social innovation.

Since 2002, the Kroc IPJ has hosted the Women PeaceMakers Fellowship program. The Fellowship offers a unique opportunity for women peacebuilders to engage in a cycle of learning, practice, research and participation that strengthens peacebuilding partnerships. The Women PeaceMakers Fellowship facilitates impactful collaborations between women peacebuilders from conflict-affected communities and international partner organizations. The Fellows also co-create research intended to shape the peacebuilding field and highlight good practices for peacebuilding design and implementation.

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