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Conflict Sensitive Assistance in Libya Forum

Conflict sensitivity and gender dynamics in Libya

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Summary

- Gender and conflict in Libya are inextricably linked. Consequently, international assistance providers need to ensure that activities relating to gender are conflict sensitive, while also ensuring that the conflict sensitivity of their assistance has adequately incorporated gender considerations.

- Gender and conflict interact in complex ways in Libya, such as around: security and safety, including gender-based violence; inclusion and participation in society, including specifically in peace processes; use of gendered narratives within political language; and gender norms which exacerbate conflict dynamics.

- This resource aims to support international assistance providers working on Libya to take gender into account in their conflict sensitivity practice. This resource outlines conflict sensitivity considerations relating to gender which can be used as a reference for international assistance providers when reviewing both gender and conflict sensitivity of their assistance activities.

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Introduction

Conflict dynamics and gender dynamics in Libya are inextricably linked. Conflict is affected by gender norms, identities, relationships and power structures, and gender dynamics can reinforce conflict drivers or support peace. Any approach to conflict sensitive assistance, therefore, requires understanding of how gender dynamics relate to peace and conflict, and how assistance interacts with these dynamics. On the other hand, assistance that fails to link gender to conflict sensitivity may inadvertently reinforce the gender inequalities and norms that underpin conflict. In doing so, opportunities may be missed to positively influence gender dynamics in a way that bolsters the potential for peace. It is therefore essential to ensure that conflict sensitivity itself adequately incorporates a gender-sensitive lens.

This resource aims to support international assistance providers working on Libya to take gender into account in their conflict sensitivity practice. The resource identifies gender-specific conflict sensitivity considerations relating to international assistance in Libya and provides suggestions on how to manage these. The resource is both intended to inform the conflict sensitivity of efforts to undertake gender-related assistance, but also to ensure that organisations' efforts to be conflict sensitive adequately embed understanding of gender-related conflict dynamics.

This resource draws on a background paper looking at gender and conflict in Libya[1], additional desk research of external resources, internal workshops with PCi staff, existing analyses from the Conflict Sensitive Assistance (CSA) in Libya programme and PCi's lessons learned from its local peacebuilding work.

The resource consists of three sections. The first section looks at the characteristics of gender dynamics in Libya. The second section outlines the relationship between gender and peace and conflict in Libya. The third section presents a matrix outlining potential gender-specific conflict sensitivity risks and opportunities relating to international assistance to Libya and identifies measures to mitigate, respond to and monitor these.

Gender dynamics in Libya

This section briefly outlines some of the key gender dynamics that characterise the Libyan context. Gender dynamics refer to the relationships and interactions between and among boys, girls, women and men and are informed by socio-cultural ideas about gender and power relations. Gender dynamics in Libya vary across different regions, towns, communities, ages and sometimes even between members of the same family and between different men and women. For example, bigger cities such as Tripoli and Benghazi are often described as having less restrictive gender norms than some other parts of the country. This resource cannot account for that diversity but seeks to broadly characterise some of the prominent gender dynamics in Libya to inform understanding of how they relate to peace and conflict. Many of the characteristics described in this section are also not unique to Libya, but reflect wider patriarchal structures present in most societies.

When looking at gender dynamics it is important to apply an intersectional lens taking into account different aspects of identity (e.g. gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socio-economic group, civil status, age etc.) and how they combine to create patterns of advantage and disadvantage. This analysis draws out structural dynamics and patterns, while seeking to take intersectionality into account to the extent possible. However, more and deeper exploration is needed to flesh out the

[1] The background paper was developed by Zahra Langhi for the Conflict Sensitive Assistance (CSA) in Libya Forum to better understand the relationship between conflict and gender in Libya. The process involved desk review, consultations and a workshop with Libyan stakeholders such as women human rights defenders, gender experts, civil society activists and local gender experts.

differentiations for different groups and intersectional identities relating to gender dynamics in Libya.

Gender norms[2]

Libyan society is characterised as having a high level of gender inequality. Women are in many ways perceived and treated as inferior to men both in distribution of roles and rights, in daily life and through laws and regulations.

While attitudes towards gender differ between geographic regions, socio-economic backgrounds and individuals' attitudes, research shows that common perceptions of women in Libya (and many other contexts) are that they are weak, vulnerable and driven by emotions compared to men who are perceived as strong and rational and expected not to show emotions.[3] Women are expected to display modesty, including in their appearance, and to obey their husbands who act as their custodians or guardians.[4] Ideals of masculinity are tied to men's ability to provide for their family (financially) and to protect their family and community, even with violence if needed.[5] Often, women are perceived as 'custodians' of the family's honour. As a result, if a woman's honour is 'violated', such as through perceived immoral or inappropriate intimate relations or sexual assault, the integrity of the family is perceived to be compromised.

Men generally have some degree of control over women who usually have less influence on decision making. Men tend to have ownership over resources and administrative documents such as property deeds.[6] Women are mostly seen to belong in the private sphere in the house and their freedom of movement outside the house is limited – in some cases due to ideas about what is appropriate for women to do and in others where women are perceived as more vulnerable and less able to manage insecurity. On the other hand, public space is largely seen to be the prerogative of men. In some contexts, predominantly in more rural areas, women are restricted from being in the presence of men outside their family.[7]

Women who seek to "challenge and oppose these norms are often harassed, stigmatized, marginalized, or threatened with violence".[8] Men who seek to go against these norms and advocate for equality and empowerment often experience that their masculinity is being called into question.[9] Moreover, efforts to address these issues are often perceived as imposing 'Western' values on the Libyan context against local values and culture.[10]

Gender in the economic sphere

Laws regulating the economic sphere in Libya reflect and reinforce prevalent ideas of the nature and appropriate roles of men and women. For example, women are obliged by law to cater to the comfort of her husband, manage the marital house and raise children.[11] Furthermore, the 2010

[2] For an example of how gender norms differ between Tuareg and Tabu communities in the South see: Mahel Taha (November 2017), 'Matriarchal and Tribal Identity, Community Resilience, and Vulnerability in South Libya', United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Special Report 416.
[3] United States for International Development (USAID) (June 2020), 'Libya Gender Analysis: Identification of constraints, opportunities & best practices in USAID/Libya'.
[4] Saferworld (December 2017), 'Building inclusive peace: Gender at the heart of conflict analysis'.
[5] Danish Refugee Council (DRC) (October 2021), 'Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices Research on Small Arms. Hay Al-Andalous, Tripoli, Libya'.
[6] Saferworld (December 2017), 'Building inclusive peace: Gender at the heart of conflict analysis'.
[7] Peaceful Change initiative (PCi) (April 2022), 'Integrating Gender into community-level peacebuilding: Lessons from Libya'.
[8] United States for International Development (USAID) (June 2020), 'Libya Gender Analysis: Identification of constraints, opportunities & best practices in USAID/Libya'.
[9] Peaceful Change initiative (PCi) (April 2022), 'Integrating Gender into community-level peacebuilding: Lessons from Libya'.
[10] Saferworld (December 2017), 'Building inclusive peace: Gender at the heart of conflict analysis'.
[11] United States for International Development (USAID) (June 2020), 'Libya Gender Analysis: Identification of constraints, opportunities & best practices in USAID/Libya'.

Labour Relations Law stipulates that "women may not be employed in jobs that are not commensurate with the nature of women".[12]

Women in Libya are more unlikely to work in paid jobs and to own or be able to access assets, which tends to make them financially dependent on men. As opposed to men and boys, women and girls are expected to carry out all household work and are the primary caregivers of children. This duty remains even when women engage in income-earning activities and may compel women to deprioritise those activities in times of crisis. For example, some women chose to or were pressured to give up their paid work to fulfil care duties during Covid-19 lockdowns.[13]

Women who work in the formal sector are concentrated in sectors and positions that are deemed appropriate for women, such as the nursing profession and the education sector, which are often not well paid nor attributed with high status. Women are further less likely to be promoted or hold higher positions. Restrictions to mobility and security concerns further disproportionately affect women's opportunities to work. Many women run small business initiatives; however, those are usually carried out from home and with limited visibility. In general, women who seek to advance in the economic sphere or portray their professional success or economic activities risk facing harassment and backlash.

Women's participation in political and civic life

During the uprising of 2011, Libya saw female political and social leaders emerge as front figures. It was a demonstration led by women which sparked the uprising. For more than a year preceding the uprising, the mothers, sisters and widows of prisoners who had been killed in a massacre following the Abu Salim prison uprising of 1996 demonstrated in Benghazi. They called for a truth commission and accountability mechanisms. The weekly protests escalated on 15 February 2011, igniting larger demonstrations that eventually called for the downfall of the regime.

Following 2011, prominent women emerged as leaders in the transitional phase; however, challenges persist relating to the full and meaningful participation by women in decision-making platforms. Those challenges range from insecurity and instability, political marginalization, patriarchal customs and violent extremist waves and conservative Islamist ideologies that reinforce the exclusion of women from political and civic life. As conflict in Libya continued to evolve, it was accompanied by new power dynamics entailing measures and policies of domination and exclusion especially against segments experiencing vulnerabilities including women, youth, children minorities and persons with disability.

> Women were at the forefront of the demonstrations as protesters, medical workers, and aid providers, as well as organizing behind the scenes and in the diaspora calling for political change and a just inclusive transition to democracy. However, they have been systematically excluded from the public sphere facing intense de-politicization and silencing at a crucial moment in their national political transformation process. The Libyan Revolution appears here, similar to other Arab revolutions, to present a 'gender paradox'. On one hand, women are the politically empowered agents of the Revolution and change. On the other hand, they are the victims of a new kind of political violence and exclusion.[14]

Today, it is not broadly accepted for women to work in the public sphere or be civically active. Those who do "are subjected to sexist language, defamation, and bullying for not abiding by social norms"[15]. At a national level there are not many women in leadership or decision-making positions in governance and policymaking, meaning policy approaches often fail to be gender sensitive.

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[12] Ibid.
[13] Peaceful Change initiative (PCi) (December 2020), 'COVID-19 and Gender in Libya Assessment'.
14 Zahra Langhi (2014), 'Gender and state-building in Libya: towards a politics of inclusion', The Journal of North African Studies, Vol. 19 Issue 2.
[15] United States for International Development (USAID) (June 2020), 'Libya Gender Analysis: Identification of constraints, opportunities & best practices in USAID/Libya'.

Nor have women been included in national and international peacemaking processes on par with men. Women who are politically or civically active or part of peacemaking processes face barriers to meaningfully participate and have substantial influence.

A coalition of 18 female participants along with male allies in the UNSMIL-led Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) succeeded in securing a provision in the roadmap for a minimum of 30% women in the new transitional government the Government of National Unity (GNU). However, the GNU later reneged on this commitment referring to the patriarchal nature of Libyan society. Yet with the continuous advocacy and pressure of the LPDF women in alliance with women-led civil society groups, the GNU agreed to appoint a female foreign minister, female justice minister (both for the first time in the history of Libya) and three other cabinet ministers. All in all, five women were appointed to the 28-member cabinet, representing only 14%, short of the 30% quota.

The participation by women in politics, civic and peace structures and initiatives at the local level is greater than their participation at the national level, although they face the same barriers. The municipal electoral system reserves one seat in municipal council elections for women and women can also run for the general seats, although few do so. Female council members often find themselves marginalised from council business and have to work harder than their male colleagues to have an influence.[16]

In many locations local politics are largely dictated by informal systems such as tribal organisation and networks of influence. Women are commonly not part of tribal leadership nor have significant influence on tribal politics. Some women council members are under pressure or control from their tribe.[17]

Nevertheless, many women find alternative and often informal channels to exercise an influence, for example through lobbying male family members.[18] Locally, women have also been able to play roles in community management and facilitating dialogue between families and communities.[19] Civil society also represents a valuable mechanism for women to be active.

Gender and security and justice

The insecurity and instability Libya has faced since 2011 has impacted negatively on the security and safety of the population. Individuals' gender and other identity characteristics influence the specific security challenges they face and how they perceive and experience security and insecurity.

According to interlocutors, men are generally more targeted by armed actors, for example at checkpoints, and at risk of kidnap and arbitrary or unlawful detention. Families travelling through checkpoints are less likely to be held up or harassed than individuals. Incidents of violence, abuse or kidnap of women at checkpoints by armed actors have been reported.[20] The risk appears to be higher when women also belong to a minority or marginalised group, for example for black Libyan IDP women.[21] When women are held in detention they are at risk of sexual violence by mostly male security/armed actors. Migrant women and girls are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and sexual violence by armed actors. In time of violent conflict, sexual violence has been used deliberately as a weapon of war both against women and men to humiliate and stigmatise them.

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[16] For an example of the experience of a female council member from Sirte see: 'Sirte Went From a City Governed by ISIS To a City Governed by a Woman' by Haniya Salem Abukhirais (2020).
[17] United States for International Development (USAID) (June 2020), 'Libya Gender Analysis: Identification of constraints, opportunities & best practices in USAID/Libya'.
[18] Peaceful Change initiative (PCi) (April 2022), 'Integrating Gender into community-level peacebuilding: Lessons from Libya'.
[19] Ibid.
[20] United Nations (March 2022), 'Report of the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya', A/HRC/49/4.
[21] Women's International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF) (May 2017), 'Feminism at the Frontline: Addressing Women's Multidimensional Insecurity in Yemen and Libya'.

There are further reports of individuals being arrested or experiencing abuse, including sexual violence, due to their sexual orientation (perceived to be 'deviant') or gender identity.[22]

Women are more exposed than men to gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual violence either committed by strangers or within the family/household. GBV against women takes the form of both physical and non-physical violence, such as harassment, catcalling, verbal insults and bullying, including in online spaces. These acts, which women experience as sources of insecurity, are not universally recognised as security issues by men.[23] Similarly, violence against women is sometimes 'socially sanctioned' if they are perceived to act 'immorally', for example by having intimate relations outside of marriage.[24]

The stigma and societal shame attributed to sexual violence deter many victims both men and women (and their relatives) from reporting it or seeking help to deal with the trauma. When actors with authority or those who hold the means of violence are perpetrators, this limits access to justice even more for victims. Finally, many cases of sexual violence or GBV are treated through tribal/informal dispute resolution mechanisms that are usually led by men and premised on gender norms that compromise women's rights to redress.

The combination of security risks and prevalent gender norms – including notions of women as weak and requiring protection from male 'guardians' and perceptions that women carry the honour of the family – limit women's mobility. Women are often not allowed to travel alone but need to be accompanied by a male chaperone (mohram), including when travelling abroad. Although not required by law, women who travel without a chaperone or consent from their family may experience harassment by authorities or security actors.[25] Women's mobility has been particularly restricted during periods of armed violence or increased insecurity, particularly for those who live in rural or remote areas or those who are displaced. Periods of more restricted mobility due to conflict or crisis in turn leads to higher social isolation for women and girls compared to men and boys as they are unable to attend school, go to work or socialise.[26]

Conflict, insecurity and, more recently, the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated forced and early marriage. More families have reportedly agreed to forced and early marriage partly as a coping mechanism to alleviate their financial burden and partly as a means to transfer the liability of protecting girls, and thereby the family's honour, to another man and household. The practice is reportedly more common in rural areas and among IDPs.[27]

Attitudes towards promotion of gender equality

Working to transform gender dynamics in Libya and address gender inequality is a highly sensitive topic. Efforts are seen and framed by some as a cultural imposition from internationals seeking to promote their interests to the detriment of what they perceive as values underpinning Libyan society. Therefore, initiatives, , both those by international assistance providers and by Libyans, that explicitly work on gender issues or are perceived to transgress accepted gender norms are often met with resistance or even targeted with threats, intimidation or physical violence. Violence occurs against individuals, such as activists or those whose identity or behaviour is perceived as

[22] United Nations (March 2022), 'Report of the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya', A/HRC/49/4.
[23] Peaceful Change initiative (PCi) (December 2020), 'COVID-19 and Gender in Libya Assessment'.
[24] United States for International Development (USAID) (June 2020), 'Libya Gender Analysis: Identification of constraints, opportunities & best practices in USAID/Libya'.
[25] United States for International Development (USAID) (June 2020), 'Libya Gender Analysis: Identification of constraints, opportunities & best practices in USAID/Libya'.
[26] Peaceful Change initiative (PCi) (April 2022), 'Integrating Gender into community-level peacebuilding: Lessons from Libya'.
[27] United States for International Development (USAID) (June 2020), 'Libya Gender Analysis: Identification of constraints, opportunities & best practices in USAID/Libya'.

deviant, against places, such as facilities built to support women, or targets events, for example those that gather women and men together and address sensitive topics.

Although not universal, such attitudes are held both by individuals within the population, armed actors, religious actors and political authorities. Actors frequently invoke values of 'Islam' (based on their interpretation) and 'Libyan culture' to counter efforts at transforming gender dynamics and improving gender equality. For example, on the eve of International Women's Day on 8 March 2022, the Government of National Unity (GNU) suspended the implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in October 2021 between the Ministry of Women and UN Women to support Libya to develop a National Action Plan in the framework of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The suspension of the agreement came in the wake of a seemingly orchestrated anti-gender equality campaign taking place both online on social media and 'offline', for example with the distribution of pamphlets against the MoU.[28]

Gender-related conflict factors

This section outlines gender-related factors (political, social, economic and security) that relate to peace and conflict in Libya. These are issues which international assistance providers must consider when acting in ways that are gender- and conflict-sensitive.

Some factors directly fuel conflict while others are more deeply embedded, structural issues that foster an environment for conflict. Both types must be addressed to develop inclusive sustainable peace. The factors described are necessarily general and not universal across the country. They are likely to be experienced differently by different social groups, in different geographic areas and among different individuals. When considering their own programming, international assistance providers should further explore how the factors play out relating to different areas, groups and identities related to their specific activities.

Factor	Description
Lack of meaningful inclusion in peace processes (Political factor)	Women play a less significant role in peace processes in Libya. Even where the participation of women in peace processes is mandated or encouraged, such participation is often seen as tokenistic, or is sidelined by other powerful actors. Women may not be seen to have significant influence over the major political and armed actors who can act as spoilers in Libya's political peace processes, and so women's influence in these processes is limited. There is strongly established evidence that women's participation in peace processes increases the likelihood of success and the sustainability of peace agreements. While inclusion of women in political peace processes has raised the prominence of gender related issues within those processes, the continued lack of meaningful opportunities for women's participation in Libya ultimately undermines peace outcomes.

[28] United Nations (March 2022), 'Report of the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya', A/HRC/49/4.

Exclusive patronage networks perpetuate inequalities and marginalisation (Political and economic factor)	Access to resources and influence over decision making occur largely through patronage systems. Less powerful groups, such as women, youth, sexual and other minorities, are often excluded from these networks. This curtails their ability to participate in decision making and makes them dependent on men to access resources and services. Some women are particularly excluded, for example heads of female headed households and those who come from marginalised tribal/communal groups. The prevalence of exclusionary patronage systems is a source of (and in turn perpetuates) inequality and marginalisation which contributes to a lack of trust in governance. It can be a driver of grievances and feelings of neglect which can be instrumentalised by actors for conflict fuelling purposes.
Violent exclusion of women from political and civic life[29] (Political and security factor)	Repressive gender norms restrict women from participation in political and civic life. Female activists, human rights defenders, and others who are politically active are subjected to violent practices for control and exclusion, including verbal abuse, sexual harassment, defamation, fabrication of false narratives, extortion, threats, enforced disappearances and assassinations. While men who are politically or civically active are also targeted with acts of violence, women face targeting on the basis of their gender. For example, women who enter politics are often met with threats, hate speech and defamation. Such violent practices are commonly carried out with impunity and sometimes by authorities, which contributes to their continuation and to a loss of confidence in authorities and the justice system. Besides the psycho-social consequences for individuals, such violent practices discourage women from being politically and civically active. In addition, targeting of women has led to a decline in women's efforts in mediation, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.
Social exclusion, including of women (Social factor)	Some social groups (such as women and youth), communal groups (such as Tabu, Tuareg and Amazigh), and socio-economic groups (such as the less-educated, lower income and rural) experience actual or felt exclusion from social, economic, political and cultural life either at a local or national level and ultimately a denial of fundamental rights. Those who experience multiple disadvantages such as widows and divorced women and those married to men without Libyan citizenship are more likely to be socially excluded and marginalised.[30]

[29] For more on this see also:
Saferworld (December 2017), 'Building inclusive peace: Gender at the heart of conflict analysis'.
United States for International Development (USAID) (June 2020), 'Libya Gender Analysis: Identification of constraints, opportunities & best practices in USAID/Libya'.
Women's International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF) (May 2017), 'Feminism at the Frontline: Addressing Women's Multidimensional Insecurity in Yemen and Libya'.
[30] Peaceful Change initiative (PCi) (April 2022), 'Integrating Gender into community-level peacebuilding: Lessons from Libya'.

Social norms relating to masculinity promote violence[31] (Social and security factor)	Ideals of masculinity that emphasise the need for men to portray strength and act as providers and protectors of family and community may encourage men and boys to pick up arms.[32] Alternative forms of masculinity, for example refusing to participate in violence, are often not accepted but questioned. Pressures among young men to display macho masculine behaviour contribute to glorification of violence and militia culture. Such ideals of masculinity may be promoted through popular culture, peer pressure, or by community leaders including, in some cases, religious leaders. Participation in armed groups can represent an attractive means for young men to show strength, command respect and obtain the financial means necessary to provide for their family, i.e., fulfill their 'duties' as men.[33] Young men's membership in armed groups can be viewed as an optimizer of their masculinity and enabler of their authority especially over less powerful segments and vulnerable groups including women. This in turn is a barrier for Demobilization, Disbarment and Rehabilitation (DDR). While still prevalent, such attitudes have shifted in recent years, with notions of violent masculinity now seen as less legitimate by the broader society than in the years immediately after the revolution. When men come to conflate their conflict-related masculinity with their individual masculinity that can have adverse effects on their display of masculinity away from the battlefield as well. For example, if they lose in battle, they may resort to compensating the loss through repressing women including through violence, gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence in the public and private spheres.
Conceptions of gender-related honour trigger and escalate conflict (Social factor)	According to conceptions of women as custodians of the family's honour, perceived violations of their honour is understood as compromising the integrity of the entire family. Women's honour, and by extension their families' honour, may be perceived to be violated if a woman is (sexually) assaulted or engages in what is perceived as 'immoral' and unacceptable conduct, such as having intimate relations outside of marriage. If the honour is violated at the hands of perpetrators, this typically compels families to take revenge in order to balance the social order. Fearing the consequences, some women are reluctant to report incidents of verbal and physical violence, whereas others actively demand consequences when they've been exposed to insults. Besides the grievances and psycho-social impacts such situations have on women, this dynamic also leads to violent escalations and is used to justify violence. When incidents intersect with existing tensions between different communal groups or families, strong escalation is more likely.

[31] For an example of how gendered narratives and conceptions of masculinities have been used by conflict actors to mobilise men to join armed groups and demonise opponents, see: Center for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR) (June 2021), 'Repping Masculinity: Gendering Libyan War Propaganda'.
[32] See also: Danish Refugee Council (DRC) (October 2021), 'Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices Research on Small Arms. Hay Al-Andalous, Tripoli, Libya'.
[33] Center for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR) (June 2021), 'Repping Masculinity: Gendering Libyan War Propaganda'.

Gender-based violence (GBV) and conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) (Security factor)	Gender based violence (GBV) and conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) practices cause insecurity, fuel grievances and reinforce domination and stigmatisation of marginalised groups. Practices of CRSV have been orchestrated and used as weapons of war by conflict actors. Women have reported being subjected to sexual violence due to their ethnicities.[34] Alleged CRSV committed by members of one community to members of another have fuelled revenge narratives. Men and boys have also been sexually assaulted and sexually violated by members of armed groups and gangs. Further, sexual violence is used by armed groups as a punitive/policing measure against LGBT individuals. GBV is a common cause of insecurity for women and girls which also deters them from participation in social, political and economic life. It is perpetrated both in private and in public. Some forms of GBV have partly become normalised and accepted. In some cases, men do not share women's perceptions that GBV, such as catcalling, harassment in public settings, online bullying, represent security threats to women.[35] Such behaviour is seen by some as men's 'right' over women, particularly if they act or appear in ways that is unaligned with gender norms.
Lack of access to justice for women (Security and justice factor)	In terms of access to justice, women are disproportionately impacted by the absence of the rule of law and mechanisms of justiciability pertaining to violations of economic and social rights. Women and other disadvantaged groups face several barriers to access to justice. The formal justice system in Libya is generally not functioning at high capacity. Commonly, incidents of violence or disputes between spouses are dealt with between families and through informal/tribal dispute resolution mechanisms, in which women have limited agency and which often prioritise family honour over justice. Survivors of sexual violence or GBV are sometimes reluctant to share that they have suffered abuse as they may be at risk of additional social stigma and even violence for reporting their experience. Female survivors often fear shaming their families and communities given that sexual violence is partly understood as a 'sexual interaction' and not a crime, therefore related to a woman's honour. Male survivors are also reluctant to report experiences of sexual violence as it may be seen to compromise heir masculinity. Some groups, such as undocumented migrant women have little possibility of holding perpetrators to account as they are usually reluctant to reach out to authorities out of fear of the consequences.

[34] United States for International Development (USAID) (June 2020), 'Libya Gender Analysis: Identification of constraints, opportunities & best practices in USAID/Libya'.
[35] Peaceful Change initiative (PCi) (December 2020), 'COVID-19 and Gender in Libya Assessment'.

Restrictive religious ideologies (Political and social factor)	Some religious ideologies promoted within Libya seek to regulate social behaviour, including condoning and spreading restrictive gender norms and advocating against women's (and other groups') equal rights and participation in political, social and economic life. In some instances, these ideologies have inspired violence against women by actors seeking to impose those social norms.
Lack of gender sensitivity in laws and policies (Political factor)	Laws, policies and agreements (for example peace agreements) in Libya rarely exhibit high degrees of gender sensitivity or responsiveness. Some legislation directly stipulates inequalities between men and women or adversely affect women or other marginalised groups (such as labour laws and citizenship laws). Gender-blind approaches may also have unintended effects on women and other disadvantaged groups or mean that their needs are less well cared for than those of men, for example in service delivery. This contributes to patterns of exclusion, reinforces inequality and creates grievances.
Political narratives link efforts to promote gender equality with ideas of western imposition on Libyan cultural values (Political factor)	Within certain political narratives in Libya, promoting gender equality is equated with foreign efforts to undermine Libyan values and culture. This narrative has been used to try to delegitimise authorities or civil society actors which have engaged with or talked about gender-related issues by suggesting that they are under foreign influence. Frequent repetition of these narratives serves to foster suspicion of efforts to promote gender equality and discourage policies promoting gender equality efforts by authorities.

Conflict sensitivity interactions

Building on the peace and conflict analysis outlined in the previous sections, this section identifies a number of potential interactions between international assistance and the gender-specific peace and conflict dynamics in Libya. Conflict sensitivity interactions may entail positive or negative effects.[36]

The matrix below identifies gender-related conflict sensitivity interactions and describes how each may influence peace and conflict. For each interaction, suggested mitigations, responses and adaptations are identified aimed at managing the interaction's likelihood or impact, and potential ways of monitoring whether the interactions have occurred. Many of the suggested means for managing interactions build on PCi's experience from working at a local level in Libya.[37] The matrix is intended as a reference tool for assistance providers to use when reviewing both the gender-sensitivity and conflict-sensitivity of their assistance, together with other conflict sensitivity resources.

Conflict dynamics and gender dynamics in Libya are highly complex and manifest differently in each local geographic area. As a consequence, understanding of interactions and suggested adaptations may need to be adapted to local areas where assistance is being delivered, while additional interactions may also exist and should be identified or considered when designing or implementing activities.

The interactions identified in this matrix apply broadly to assistance and may not be equally relevant to all types of assistance or in all situations. Additional interactions may also exist and should be identified or considered when designing or implementing activities. However, assistance planners and project staff can draw on the interactions outlined in the matrix when reviewing their own assistance activities to identify relevant conflict sensitivity interactions.

[36] Guidance on how to use the interactions matrix, and on PCi's interactions typology can be found in Peaceful Change initiative (PCi) (June 2022), 'Conflict Sensitivity Manual for Libya', available at www.peacefulchange.org/resources

[37] Lessons learned from that experience is captured in: Peaceful Change initiative (PCi) (April 2022), 'Integrating Gender into community-level peacebuilding: Lessons from Libya'.

Interaction	Description	Mitigation, response and adaptation
Inclusion or exclusion of women in decision making processes relating to assistance promotes norms about levels of inclusion. (Modelling behaviour effect)	Assistance approaches that do not include women or other disadvantaged groups, either in activities, in staff/delegation composition or in decision making around activities (for example around distribution) signal that such exclusion is accepted. It applies to both quantity and quality of participation, i.e., that women are represented and whether their voices are heard, and inputs taken into account. This reinforces exclusionary practices and feeds marginalisation. On the other hand, assistance delivered in a way that continuously demonstrates meaningful inclusion of women and other disadvantaged groups underscores the importance of inclusive and participatory approaches.	Continually seek for broad gender parity in staffing and in all assistance activities. Consider also other identity aspects such as social group, geographic location, age etc. Make sure promotion of participation of women is explicit to highlight the importance of inclusion. Take additional measures to ensure that women and other disadvantaged groups are able to participate on equal par with men, and that their inputs are taken into account including in final products/decisions. For example, by working with male allies to promote acceptance and ensure buy in of women's participation. When appropriate (having assessed safety risks and taken measures to mitigate those), make sure that representation and active participation of women and other disadvantaged groups are displayed in communications about activities.
Enhance meaningful participation of women in decision making, particularly around peace. (Capacity effect)	The mere presence of women and other gender-related stakeholders in decision making processes is insufficient. Where such participation is not meaningful, such as where women's voices are sidelined or ignored, it can promote the idea that tokenistic participation is acceptable. This is particularly important in peace processes both at national and local level, where meaningful inclusion of women is likely to enhance the sustainability of outcomes by ensuring greater buy-in and responsiveness to issues faced by a larger portion of the community.	Ensure that women's participation in decision making processes relating to activities, and to peace processes, does not default to merely being in the room, but includes opportunities to genuinely contribute. Ensure awareness of and sensitivity to less-accepting attitudes around participation of women. Where genuine participation of women may prompt a backlash, structure processes in a way that promotes increasing meaningfulness of participation over time while transforming attitudes.

Assistance providing visibility to participants regarding gender-related activities may expose them to safety risks. (Attention effect)	Assistance that promotes or enhances the visibility of women or men who challenge existing gender norms may expose them to increased safety risks. This could, for example, be female leaders, women who are active in sectors that are male-dominated, individuals with specific sexual orientations, or women or men who speak out against gender norms.	Work closely with Libyan team members, partners and participants to assess risks. Ensure that communications material is reviewed by Libyan team members, partners and participants. Create safeguarding channels whereby risks and threats can be flagged and reported. Establish readiness for rapid responses in case a risk or threat materialises. Be ready to lower visibility in communications if deemed necessary.
Working with actors that support conflict-fuelling gender norms / adopt gender-repressive practices implies acceptance of those attitudes/practices. (Recognition effect)	When assistance providers and diplomatic missions engage with actors, they provide recognition to these actors and empower them. If actors are applying violent and/or exclusionary approaches, promoting restrictive or repressive gender norms and/or using gendered narratives for conflict purposes, assistance indirectly provides recognition to such practices. This can embolden actors and contribute to worsening marginalisation. It may also compromise the credibility (and thereby effectiveness) of assistance providers when they condemn and advocate against such practices.	Agree on collective approaches and principles towards working with actors in order to manage the issue consistently. This involves recognising and articulating the costs and benefits associated with any course of action when engaging with actors. Engage in clear and coherent messaging (by internationals and Libyan partners) towards national and Libyan counterparts as well as the population more widely on the principles and basis for international engagement. When necessary, put in place measures to decrease the association risks, for example by lowering visibility of support or adjusting communication strategies, so that when negative behaviours do occur, messaging delinks assistance providers from the perception that they are condoning them.

Assistance approaches that address gender dynamics and promote gender equality are perceived as imposed by foreign actors and create backlash. (Attention effect)	Assistance that seeks to challenge gender norms or transform gender dynamics may be perceived as attempts to impose foreign values or foreign agendas on Libyan society. If this is the case, there is a risk they will be met with resistance and backlash, including exposing women (and male champions) to reputational risks and threats of or actual violence. Besides the safety risks for individuals, this may further entrench resistance to change and thereby undermine attempts at transformation.	Work with and support Libyan actors and initiatives that are already working on similar issues. Ensure that assistance approaches are tailored to the Libyan (and specific local) context. For example, frame gender issues according to Libyan cultural references and draw on culturally specific symbols and role models. Work closely with Libyan team members, partners and participants to design, test and adapt approaches. Identify and engage with Libyan cultural champions to promote transformation of gender norms. Be ready to apply additional measures or intermediate steps to build buy in and acceptance of approaches.
Peace promotion activities that do not take into account prevalent conceptions of masculinity among youth are less likely to succeed. (Prioritisation effect)	Peace promotion activities, including formal peace processes at national and local level, are unlikely to be sustainable without addressing prevalent social norms of masculinity that promote violence.	Ensure that overall programming strategy and prioritisation by donors includes efforts to address notions of masculinity at social and individual level and that this is strategically tied into peace initiatives.

Further contact

For further contact, reach out to PCi's Conflict Sensitive Assistance (CSA) Forum via libyacsa@peacefulchange.org

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The Conflict Sensitive Assistance in Libya (CSA) Forum, funded by the Government of Switzerland and the European Union and facilitated by the Peaceful Change initiative, aims to support the ability of international assistance providers working in and on Libya to undertake their work in a conflict-sensitive manner – minimising the risk of harm caused by their assistance and maximising opportunities to promote positive peace.

The CSA forum has been run since 2013 and includes: regular forum meetings bringing together international organisations, donors and implementers to consider how the changing context in Libya affects and is affected by their programming; research and preparation of resource materials relating to conflict sensitivity in Libya; and technical support to implementers, through convening discussions, provision of training, and tailored advice relating to conflict sensitivity.