

# **Factoring Gender into the Discourse on Post Conflict Economic Development: A Conceptual Framework**

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The post second world war era saw a vast output of neoclassical economic theories for developing conflict hit Europe and Japan. For instance, the linear stages growth theories were central in the Marshall Plan policy initiatives for revitalizing Europe's economy after World War II. The neoclassical resurgence in the 1980's heavily influenced the post cold war debates of "shock therapy" and "gradualism" as policy courses for economies in transition from Communist central planning to decentralized market mechanisms. The most recent literature on post conflict development comes from the works of Collier (2003) and Collier, Hoeffler and Soderbom (2008). The post conflict recovery recommendations of the above mentioned authors are predominantly neoclassical in nature. Known as Expeditionary Economics, is another body of literature which is largely catering to the United States led post conflict development attempts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The justification for Expeditionary Economics is also found in Japan's economic success during the seven years of American occupation and from the experience of the Marshall Plan.

In this backdrop of 'neoclassicalized' post conflict development theory, major weaknesses of neoclassical theory apply to post conflict development outcomes. Feminist Economics discourse brings to light one such missing dimension in neoclassical theory: the neoclassical economic discourse is gender blind.

Hence, this work is centered on the major question of how to shape post conflict development mechanisms to address the needs of women and female headed households. It is significant for the following reasons. Firstly, female headship is a large-scale phenomenon in post-conflict settings, and such households are particularly vulnerable to poverty. Secondly, the conflict driven vulnerabilities of women demand particular protection and assistance that exceeds or is different from the needs of men, thus when both poverty and headship continues to be feminized assistance for livelihoods, child care, shelter and access to credit continues to be vital. Therefore, a gendered analysis is needed to assess post conflict economic development.

This paper is a presentation of a conceptual framework in assessing vulnerabilities, risks and current household outcomes of female headed households in the post conflict regions of Sri Lanka. The degree of vulnerability depends on the characteristics of the risks and the households' ability to respond to risks. Hence, central to the framework is the notion of risk regarding income, assets and consumption.

As data the paper predominantly uses secondary data in terms of available literature mainly based on the feminist discourse and gender analytical methods. It also uses my own field experiences in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka working with vulnerable female headed households. In conclusion, this framework is an integrated risk, livelihood and gender analysis that will be tested by the author's future field work and can be viewed as the theoretical underpinning towards a gender mainstreamed post conflict development approach.

**Keywords:** feminist economics, neoclassical economics, post conflict development, female headed households