Gender and fragile citizenship in Uganda: the case of Acholi women

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The present article discusses how perceptions and practices of citizenship are experienced in the post-conflict situation of the Acholi region in northern Uganda. Here, the population lived through protracted conflict and long-term displacement into camps, caused by the Lord's Resistance Army. The article elaborates the lived experiences of Acholi women during and after the conflict and how their experiences shape their understanding and practices of citizenship at present. It thus attempts to discuss the intersection between gender, conflict and citizenship.

Introduction

In the Acholi region of northern Uganda, men and women have experienced protracted conflict and displacement since the late 1980s, caused by the rebel group called the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). During several phases of the war, the Acholi were forcibly displaced into camps as 'internally displaced persons' (IDPs).[1] Many people have been displaced for about five years, but a large share of the Acholi population was in camps for as long as ten years, or even longer.

Since stability returned in 2006, people have started to move out of the camps and return to their home areas. They face many challenges in this return process and the reconstruction of their lives at home. One of these is their transition from the status of IDPs to 'returnees', and thereafter they are expected to be 'ordinary' citizens of Uganda. While the Acholi were formally citizens throughout the war, and before it, they have been on the margins of citizenship for decades, in terms of their adverse security situation, disrupted livelihoods, impoverishment, and the lack of freedom while in the camps. In addition, protracted conflict and their displacement into the camps have left an imprint on people's perceptions and practices of citizenship.

The present article attempts to link the debates on gender, conflict, and citizenship, by discussing the lived experiences of Acholi women during and after the conflict, and

exploring the different perceptions men and women have of themselves as citizens of Uganda.

Feminist insights into citizenship and conflict

Citizenship is an issue of inclusion and exclusion (Abraham *et al.* 2010). Scholars focusing on citizenship have pointed out the mechanisms and processes in society that prevent women in particular from exercising agency and realising citizenship rights. However, this has been discussed less in relation to contexts of conflict and state fragility (Castillejo 2011). While the question of gender and citizenship is complex in itself, the experience of conflict adds another layer of complexity.

Feminist scholars have contributed significantly to debates about conflict and security. Conventional approaches see conflict, war and guerrilla struggles as the domains of male fighters and perpetrators, while women are represented largely as victims of (sexual) violence who need protection (Moser and Clark 2001). In contrast to the stereotypes featured in conventional approaches, feminist academics and activists have demonstrated that reality is not so clear-cut. Men can be victims and women can be active in war, and individuals can take on multiple roles. Feminist scholars have also argued that the experience of violent conflict and its aftermath is strongly gendered – that is, they are experienced differently by men and women. Feminist scholars, therefore, advocate for context-specific research that looks at the differentiated impact of violent conflict for women and men, gender-sensitive approaches to conflict analysis, more awareness for women's security needs, and for equal participation of women in peace processes (Denov 2007).

Dominant approaches to post-conflict recovery continue to concentrate on state-institutions, assuming that society will follow suit. While state institutions are important, such a focus overlooks how citizens have to re-engage with the state, which is still fragile, and has not yet established its legitimacy. A focus on citizenship places citizens at the centre of the reconstruction process, thus taking their perspectives about society as a starting point. The Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability (Citizenship DRC 2010) has demonstrated that living in conditions where violence is chronic can result in 'fragile citizenship'.[2] Violent conflict freezes social interactions, limits political space and causes people to refrain from openly discussing – let alone challenging – certain issues and actors pertaining to the conflict. It can thus undermine people's opportunities, will, and capacity to be critically engaged in the public sphere, resulting in fragile citizenship. This process of forming state–citizen relations looks different for men and women.

It is important to look at the intersections between gender, conflict and citizenship, and in particular to focus on the aftermath of conflict, when democratic governance processes are re-defined and shaped. Feminist scholars highlight the fact that violent conflict transforms social structures in society, including gender relations. This

transformation affects the opportunities for women to participate as citizens in social and political processes. Some argue that as a result, the post-conflict period can offer new opportunities for women to participate in, and practise, citizenship. Yet, women can meet strong resistance in society and in the political institutions where they try to get involved (Castillejo 2011).

The present article draws on findings from ten months of village-based research in rural areas of the Acholi and Langi sub-regions of Uganda. Acholi women have all experienced a brutal war and long-term displacement, and this experience intersects with their gendered experience and practice of citizenship. While Acholi men and women share notions of citizenship to some extent, there are also profound differences. It is important to understand the gender dimensions of both the conflict experience and Acholi citizenship. Together, these shape social structures and power relations in post-conflict Acholiland, and affect how women participate in society as citizens.

The conflict in brief

Acholi region in northern Uganda was the scene of rebel violence for over 20 years, starting from the late 1980s up until 2006. The LRA, led by Joseph Kony, emerged in response to the seizure of power by the National Resistance Army (NRA) in 1986, which made Yoweri Museveni president. Museveni has been in power ever since. The LRA started its operations against the NRA regime, but quite soon after began committing large-scale atrocities such as killing, maiming, burning houses, and the forced recruitment of men, women, and children. The LRA did not communicate a clear political agenda, though many of its acts can be seen as political messages against the regime. For example, it targeted local people who became members in the local governance system that was established by the NRA. Also, it committed symbolic acts of violence, such as the cutting off of lips and ears of people who were suspected of reporting rebels to the government (Finnström 2003).

A key feature of the conflict has been the displacement of the population into displacement camps. This started in 1996 in Gulu district, western part of Acholi, with the government's measure to 'protect' the population in 'protected villages'. Towards the end of 2003, over 1.5 million people were displaced, which includes 90 per cent of the Acholi population (Norwegian Refugee Council 2003, 8). Over the years, the conflict acquired regional and international dimensions with the LRA establishing bases in South Sudan, allegedly supported by the government of Sudan from the mid-1990s, a military operation 'Iron Fist', led by the Ugandan army on Sudanese territory in 2002, and the indictment of LRA commanders by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2005.

A new series of peace talks started in Juba in 2006. Partial agreements were reached, resulting in stability in the Acholi sub-region. Immediately, Acholi people started

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leaving the congested camps, something encouraged by the government and humanitarian actors.

Many Acholi people, now labelled 'returnees' and no longer IDPs, first settled in 'satellite camps' closer to their original homes and areas of cultivation. There, they start a challenging recovery process; in these areas, infrastructure – for example, roads – has not been maintained for over two decades, and this means they cannot gain access to many services. Gradually, people construct their compounds, building huts for cooking and sleeping, and then move in with their few possessions and animals. Local government institutions have also started operating, but in many places lack personnel, adequate office space and resources. It is in these areas of return that this study was carried out, when people were still busy constructing their homes.

Even though the insecurity ended in 2006, at the time of writing in 2011 both people and local government institutions are still in transition. Against this background, citizenship practices need to develop, but one needs to see this as part of the full historical trajectory of the Acholi region.

The research and its context

The research took place in 2010, as part of my doctoral research. My research examines how conflict affects both men's and women's perceptions of themselves as citizens, as members of the wider socio-political community, and their perceptions of the state. The parts of my research on which the present article draws were carried out in a sub-county near Kitgum town (a small town at the centre of one of the Acholi districts), and in a much more remote sub-county in Lamwo district, far away from Kitgum town, bordering South Sudan to the north, and which had been one of the LRA 'hotspots' during the war when they operated from their bases in Sudan.

In my fieldwork, I was careful to include a balance of both men and women, and people of different age groups. Although I had not previously focused specifically on gender issues in my work, it became immediately apparent that the conversations and interviews with men and women evolved differently, and that the men and women expressed themselves differently. There were also profound differences in how they spoke about the state and about themselves as citizens, though also some similarities. I started mapping these variations, and then carried out focus groups with women, about how they see their voice as being different from men's. In addition to focus groups, I used a range of other qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews on selected topics, life history interviews,[3] and participatory research methods designed for violent conflict settings.

In the next sections, I discuss some of the findings of the part of the research that specifically looked at the participation of women as citizens

Women's experiences of citizenship during the conflict

The LRA conflict has seen different phases and levels of intensity, affecting both men and women. The period of displacement formed an important episode in Acholi lives during the conflict, but many years of the conflict were lived outside the camp, in home areas. I will now examine several aspects of life during the insurgency, and relate those to citizenship formation, starting with those that were experienced throughout the war, and will then look into the particularities of the camp setting.

Daily life during the insurgency

Ongoing insecurity altered people's priorities, and their views of what mattered most. For Acholi citizens, it severely limited the possibilities of actively engaging with the state. In the early years, when soldiers and representatives of the regime violently controlled the region, people limited their contact with state institutions to the minimum necessary, and interactions were concentrated around security. The Resistance Councils (RCs), the system of local governance that was rolled out by the NRA regime, were the 'hands and eyes' of the regime. People commented that they did not actively resist this, but they just 'accepted' it, reasoning that every government introduces its systems, and 'one just has to go with it'. The RCs could not easily take root in remote areas, and those in RC positions were targeted by rebels.

When LRA activities were tense, the primary concerns were security and food for survival. Families frequently left their homes and slept in the bush, sometimes for several days. Women and small babies sometimes needed to hide separately, because a crying child might reveal people's hiding place. Social gatherings were barely possible, and when they took place only few people would attend, since crowds might attract rebels. In meetings the security situation would then be the main item for discussion. Women's household duties made their interactions with state authorities even fewer than those of men, since they tended to be responsible for food and looking after the children in the hideouts rather than participating in public affairs. Many people state 'there was no such thing as development to talk about in those days'. Services such as education and health were disrupted. From a citizen's perspective, the state was nearly irrelevant in terms of meeting development needs. One man in his forties stated:

> *The war made people to lose the wealth they had and [they] were just thinking of only how to protect themselves ... they feel so depressed and isolated by the government. People were not settled in the mind. They could not think of having a voice, because the only thing they could focus on was where to run for protection and where to get food.*

Though the LRA was evidently the main aggressor in the conflict, the military also committed grave atrocities against the Acholi population and was a source of insecurity as much as it was a source of protection. People said they had often found

themselves caught in-between two fires, in the sense that the rebels accused them of reporting LRA combatants to the government, and the military, in turn, suspected they collaborated with the rebels. One man recalled:

> *There was a fear during the insurgency, during that time people had no voice. Sometimes the government soldiers could arrest civilians that they were rebels, but they were not. Those civilians who were unlucky were killed by soldiers even after telling soldiers that they were not rebels.*

The presence of the military also resulted in living under a form of social control and with limited freedom; people had to be careful where to go and what to say to whom. Forms of political agency were suppressed, especially in what became the 'protected villages' or the displacement camps (Branch 2009).

Changing ideas of masculinity during the war

Gender is a relational issue and we cannot understand women, citizenship, and conflict in Acholi society without understanding what the war did to Acholi men. When asked what 'a good citizen' does, men focused on the responsibility to protect and provide, while women emphasised child care and contributing to community relations – such as being good to neighbours, relatives and friends. However, these models came under pressure during the war. It was a common complaint among Acholi men that the war made them 'lose their masculinity'. An Acholi man is supposed to provide food and protection to his family. He becomes mature by coming of age, completing his education and by getting married and having a family. It is then that a man's voice starts to count (Dolan 2009). This means that unmarried youth are not taken seriously until they meet these criteria. In the context of war-torn Uganda, most men could not fulfil these conditions. Unable to meet societal expectations, men became frustrated, which was described by some as prompting feelings of humiliation. This caused various social and psychological problems, such as alcoholism, suicide attempts, and engaging in violence – in fights or domestic violence – and also caused some men to join the armed forces. It could also lead to the perpetration of psychological violence, through the suppression of the less powerful, such as women and youth. This has affected women's position in Acholi society, and their potential for citizen participation.

In the camps, women had been able to improve their bargaining position in the household by earning an income. They could do this through brewing and selling beer in the camps, or by engaging in small businesses such as running a canteen or small-scale trading. However, these activities offered limited scope for empowerment in that while they might have helped strengthen women's bargaining power with men in their households for a short period of time, they did not coincide with a wider social process that dealt with the relations and power imbalances between men and women, nor help

women who were faced with the violent and negative outcomes of the crisis in men's identity that had emerged during the insurgency.

The Acholi displacement camps

Temporary displacement to towns started sporadically, as early as 1989. From 1996, displacement became a more permanent condition for those in a large part of the region, and after a second wave of displacement in 2002–2003, more or less the entire population of the region was living in towns and IDP camps.

Problems in displacement camps are strongly gendered, as many authors have pointed out (Grabska 2011; Hyndman 2000). Many 'typical camp problems' such as insecurity and hygiene, health, water and sanitation have particularly negative effects on women. In the Acholi displacement camps, tasks that seemed relatively simple became very demanding, and often posed serious threats to women's security in relation to their health and bodies, and caretaking duties. Fetching water is traditionally a woman's responsibility, and in the camp it meant lining up for hours in the sun. Getting hold of firewood for cooking also involved mainly women. With military escorts they moved further away from the camp to collect firewood. The soldiers asked them to slash the bushes on the sides of roads leading to the camp to enhance visibility; a security measure to prevent rebels from approaching. Women described it to me as something they feared to do, as they had to be constantly alert.

In the camps, overcrowding put social relations under pressure. One woman, aged 33, in Kitgum said:

Issues concerning the home were left to the women; feeding children, raising them, paying for medical bills and buying scholastic materials among other things. Men just used to sit and wait for food. They did nothing in the camp.

In the camps, many women continued to experience lack of voice in decision-making, and insecurity in their homes. Though virtually everyone underwent some training on women's rights in the camp, given by international agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Rescue Committee (IRC), and World Vision, the message given appears to have been reduced to 'you should not beat your wife', and even that principle did not seem to have been enacted. Messages about gender equality seemed to have led to suspicion among men that women would take over power rather than gain equal power. This came on top of the humiliation of badly damaged 'manhood' during the war, which increased the likelihood of aggressive responses by men. A woman in Kitgum, aged 38, stated:

My difficulties in the camp were domestic issues. My husband was not responsible in taking his duty as a man because he got things like food in the house, and my husband could sell it off and drink the money without doing something productive with it. My husband was beating me time

and again. My husband could sell the food we get from UN and the little we cultivate. There was serious domestic violence which made me go back to my parents, up to only two months ago. There was a quarrel between me and my husband, and he chased me away. Chasing me from his home was something that made me very upset until when I came back. Quarrelling is a daily problem that I have with my husband when he is drunk and can abuse me.

Displacement camps are settings where women face high risks of falling victim to sexual violence (Abdi 2006). This is an issue widely reported on and recognised by humanitarian actors, yet often the measures taken to reduce these risks are insufficient or inappropriate. Both male camp residents, and the soldiers that are supposed to protect women, are perpetrators of sexual violence. Rape and sexual violence often occur as 'surprise acts' wherein a woman is overpowered by a perpetrator, for example, when leaving the camp to fetch water or firewood, when attending the lavatories at night, or when alone at home. Camp infrastructure such as street lights, and the careful physical location of lavatories, are measures commonly adopted to reduce such vulnerability (Branch 2009).

Less attention is paid to the existing power relationships within the camp, and how these affect women by 'capturing' them in an unequal relationship of power with particular men who use this power to obtain sex. This dynamic becomes apparent through some of the stories told by female respondents. Getting food and money – both in short supply – for the household, became largely women's responsibility. Some respondents explained how women in the camp, under pressure to feed their children, had sex with men in camp leadership positions, and with shopkeepers, soldiers, and even humanitarian volunteers. Some might see this as a livelihood strategy; a form of prostitution. Such a rationalisation, however, should not lead to the ignoring of structural inequality, in terms of power, in which men take advantage of the vulnerable position of women.

Though the specific vulnerabilities of women in displacement camps must be recognised, so must their agency. Their strategies to ensure the livelihood of their families, the numerous activities they carry out in order to survive, the caring for neighbours and relatives, demonstrate their strengths. Their agency is a double-edged sword, however. While their continuous strength and agency helps them to survive, it also means they carry the heavy burden of ensuring survival in the camps.

Camp leadership
In the camps, a hierarchical structure of self-rule was put in place by the humanitarian agencies, in collaboration with the district authorities. The camp leadership consisted of a 'camp commandant' at the top, with zone/block leaders and ward leaders at lower levels, who were all Acholi residents from the. The camp leaders were the first point of contact for the implementing humanitarian agencies, and worked with them in partnership.

When asked about the voice of the people while they were still in the camps, a man who was formerly a camp commandant, answered:

People were not having any power at all, but they had a say. When things are not good they should talk about it. I was very strict on them. They should not go directly to an NGO but come to me. At times the agencies brought rotten food. I would tell them 'We are also human beings, we are in problems but we have the right to have food that is good for human consumption'. I would say this to the field staff of World Food Programme and to the NGOs. The people respected me. They know I could talk better to NGOs than them.

Much as the camp leaders did their best to organise the right quantities and quality of relief, there were numerous accounts of how they used their position to control the camp population. Women were more vulnerable to this abuse of power while in the camps, and the data from my study suggest that this has had lasting consequences on how they have used and exercised their voice after leaving the camps. One 43-year-old woman in Lamwo district said:

If you were an enemy of the camp leader your name would be removed, if it was already registered. Or your name would be registered but would not appear on the list when relief came. For example, I registered several times but did not get food relief.

Women reported being afraid of being 'crossed off the food list' if they 'say anything bad on the leaders'. This would have severe consequences for their families. Though it was possible for people to air concerns about issues such as relief and health, there was limited space to criticise the various forms of leadership.

What are the legacies of these experiences from the period of conflict and displacement for practices of citizenship at present? This question brings me to a discussion of the lived experience of citizenship in Acholi today. There is no unified citizenship experience, nor can the effects of conflict be reduced to a simple list of factors. Findings show that men and women share feelings of belonging to the wider nation of Uganda and shared perceptions of the central state. Yet, citizenship practices at a more local level are different.

Women's experience of citizenship after the conflict

In the post-conflict period, how did women's sense of citizenship develop? How was this different from that of men? Both Acholi men and women recognise that stability has returned, and this has enabled them to leave the camps, and start rebuilding their lives. Yet, men and women have different understandings of peace and how it is experienced locally. This is important for how we see citizenship in relation to peace and security, and how it is experienced in both the public and the private sphere.

Now that the camps have been dismantled, and the presence of the military has decreased, the risk of armed violence has been greatly reduced. Despite this, however, the LRA and its leader Joseph Kony are still out there, and in the back of people's minds is the idea that he might return. The war has exacerbated the economic marginalisation of the Acholi region in the north. Many Acholi feel left behind, neglected by the regime. Some respondents seem to have internalised the idea that they are on their own and the best thing a state can do is leave them alone, as a man in his late fifties expressed: 'Let me do my digging in the garden, let those [leaders] up there do their business. Let me cultivate in peace, we Acholi now need to be strong and build our lives. Those at the top don't know'. The result is disengagement from the state, and a lack of trust that any engagement would lead to results.

The workload for women, which increased in the camps, has not been reduced in the post-conflict period. The change in gendered roles – brought about by the conflict and life in the camps, and which transferred many responsibilities from men to women, has seemingly become entrenched. Women indicated it is they who bring up and 'teach' the children, and do the bulk of the household work, as well as most cultivation. Even though men can be seen working in the gardens, digging in groups or with the ox-plough, it is, according to the women, done less than before the camp.

As stated earlier, the rate of domestic violence increased seriously during the insurgency, and many women still face violence to their bodies on a daily basis. One woman expressed this very powerfully: 'As long as there is no peace in our homes, the war is not over'. The responses of women show that while citizens should enjoy security and freedom at home, to Acholi women, this is still a far-fetched reality. It also supports the claim made by feminist thinkers that there is no clear boundary between the public and the private spheres.

Access to local leaders and involvement in decision-making

In this study, a number of institutional mapping exercises were carried out, in which we discussed the most important leaders (formal and customary) and the direct interactions between people and those leaders. The exercises were carried out in separate male and female focus groups.

Discussions with both men and women showed very clearly that women have limited access to local leaders to enable them to resolve issues. Men have more frequent interactions than women with a broader range of leaders, in particular, regarding the formal Local Council system.

Women will first discuss domestic problems with their father-in-law, and then with the clan leaders of their husbands'. If a problem is not resolved, a woman can still go to the chair person of the Local Council at village level, but many will not do this. Furthermore, the Local Council committee is usually dominated by men. As a result, many problems experienced by women at home are not solved to their satisfaction.

In terms of community decision-making, women face numerous barriers in using the existing participatory structures of the Local Councils. Community development issues are supposed to be discussed by the entire village community, after which the Local Council and its committee take it further up the system. Currently, villages can express their priorities for the reconstruction of infrastructure in various non-government organisation (NGO) and donor-funded recovery programmes. Even the planning of physical infrastructure has gender dimensions, in that many of those services are used by women and their involvement is necessary from the very beginning (Zuckerman and Greenberg 2004). In most cases, it is only the Local Council chairperson and a small number of secretaries that discuss an issue among themselves, without involving the wider community. When community meetings are held, it is mainly the men who do the talking, with women speaking very little, and then often only at the end of the meeting. One woman commented: 'Because people look at leaders as someone who is above them and they cannot challenge him. Women fear being beaten by their husbands if they speak out, they will say the women are embarrassing them'. Another female participant in a focus group said:

> *Mostly men talk [in meetings], sometimes only two or three women give their opinion. The rest of the women fear, they feel the people's eyes on them. That is the nature of women, they have public fear. At times, perhaps, the Local Council listens to women, it depends on how you speak.*

Women are expressing the lack the confidence feelings of powerlessness and norms that dictate that men speak on women's behalf. The result is that women have little opportunity to being actively involved in decision-making and thus in practicing citizenship.

Another factor that undermines women's voice in the post conflict period is the legacy of the camp leadership. As a result of living under a hierarchical camp leadership structure, many women still find it difficult to challenge local leaders. While men generally feel it is now 'easier to talk to leaders, because we no longer depend on them for relief', women fear that a leader becomes 'an enemy' if they criticise him. Though this reticence and fear is also caused by socio-cultural factors, the data suggest that women have internalised the dependency and subordination to authority that they experience during life in the camps. This internalised fear exacerbates existing socio-cultural factors that make it hard for women to speak out, demonstrating how gender and the experience of displacement intersect, and how this affects women's later experience of citizenship.

Conclusion

The experiences of conflict and living as displaced people within a camp have eroded Acholi women and men's feelings of belonging to the Ugandan state, and resulted in

mistrust of state institutions. The Acholi population has focused on security and survival throughout this lengthy period, and has not been able to develop a working relationship with local state bodies. Women have less opportunity to engage in decision-making and realise citizenship rights, something which stems from socio-cultural factors, but is further complicated by the conflict. The preoccupation with security, and the hierarchical camp leadership, has had a silencing effect, especially on women. The disjuncture between expected and realised masculinities was deepened during the war, and now that stability has returned, men are trying to re-establish their authority. Though this stability has reappeared only recently, and things can still change, at present there are indications that men do this by perpetuating stereotypes about gender roles, which deny women equal voice. This limits women's ability to air their concerns and influence decision-making. As I have described, it is not simply about not being aware of certain rights, but also about internalised powerlessness and self-censorship. Though these women have demonstrated strength in developing coping strategies to survive the war, they face numerous challenges in acting upon aspirations that go beyond coping, to realise their citizenship rights. To overcome such fragility of citizenship, it is important to transform dominant power relations in society, which includes traditional conceptions of masculinity, and violent norms, and emphasise relations of cooperation, peaceful dispute resolution, and equality (Zucker-man and Greenberg 2004).

There is growing awareness of the importance of women's involvement in peace negotiations and settlement, and in formal politics (Castillejo 2011). There has been increasing recognition of the special needs of female ex-combatants, though policy responses do not yet adequately address them. While it is relatively easy to work with clearly identifiable groups such as these, the majority of 'ordinary', rurally based women should not be forgotten. Using gender and citizenship as point of reference in discussions would be a start to incorporating these women. The concept of citizenship can help in recognising the difficulties they face in participating equally in a post-conflict society.

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Notes

1 Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are:

> *...persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the*

effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised State border. (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2004, 1)

IDPs thus remain under the sovereignty of their home state, and it is therefore their national government that is responsible for their well-being and security. This is in contrast with refugees who leave their country of origin and are displaced into a different state, and can appeal to international refugee law regimes. See also the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) www.internal-displacement.org

2   The idea of fragile citizenship is based on work coming out of the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability (2000–2010), hosted at the Institute of Development Studies: www.drc-citizenship.org. The summary document *Blurring the Boundaries. Citizen Action Across States and Societies* (Citizenship DRC 2011) pays special attention to citizenship in fragile settings.

3   The life history interview proved very useful to interview women. Life history interviews can provide information about what happens in society through the accounts of individuals. This technique is thus useful to study historical developments and changes in society. It captures how an individual responded to change, and what were its underlying strategies and motivations. Women felt more comfortable talking about their personal histories and relate from there to other issues, rather than jumping to a variety of topics directly.

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