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### Mechanisms of atrocity prevention policy brief on gender mainstreaming

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# Mechanisms of Atrocity Prevention Policy Brief on Gender Mainstreaming



I GMAP

Institute for  
Genocide and  
Mass Atrocity  
Prevention

Binghamton University  
State University  
of New York

by Dr. Darcie DeAngelo



### ISSUE:

“Beautiful brother,” remarked one of the deminers to me, nodding towards Meas,\* a landmine detector who wore headphones while washing the kennels of the landmine detection rats. The deminer remarking on Meas giggled at me and proceeded to mouth the word ktheyoy a sometimes derogatory term for queer people in Southeast Asia. This queer identity usually meant that the person identified themselves as the third gender, but Meas had been hired as a woman. I frowned. As an anthropologist, I had been conducting on-site fieldwork with various platoons with scent detecting rats, but I had come across very human-related dilemmas in all these landmine detection platoons I had observed.

Platoon members had been hired with gender mainstreaming incentives in mind—in one platoon, on paper, several women had been hired onto the technique’s training program despite the lack of women who had applied. Meas was listed as one of these women. But when their coworker called them ktheyoy I realized that this gender nomination mismatched with Meas’s own identity. Meas themselves were very open about their third gender identity in the ways they interacted with supervisors, colleagues, and friends. Meas would use the men’s bathroom and would join the men in different tasks when the two cisgendered women

performed other duties. They also were open about their partner who was a woman. And, while they shrugged off the slurs and jokes made towards them, I noticed that there was an unintended consequence to the lack of official acknowledgment of their third gender. Meas was sometimes excluded from social events in the platoon. Meas had to work extra hard to be given prestigious tasks like publicity tours. Being the third gender meant that Meas had a difficult time in a highly militarized setting of landmine detection, but I also noticed that the official lack of acknowledgment, the naming of Meas as a woman, exacerbated these difficulties. That is, the official paperwork that only acknowledged two genders implicitly sanctioned unofficial practices of prejudice against gender-nonconforming people. Meas’s situation is not singular. On various demining platoons across Southeast Asia, all-women or mostly-women platoons have been implemented according to gender mainstreaming initiatives from the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining. How many nonbinary people are excluded, unacknowledged, or misgendered because of these initiatives?

The purpose of this brief is to provide recommendations on how to approach the possibilities of gender mainstreaming when gender identities are nonbinary. This brief also gives an overview of gender mainstreaming issues when it comes to downstream phases of atrocity prevention

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\* Names and descriptions of people have been altered to protect their identities according to ethical review board guidelines



Worker cleaning rat kennels

in places that have recently recovered from civil wars—the same civil wars which systematically committed violence against women and gender non-conforming people.

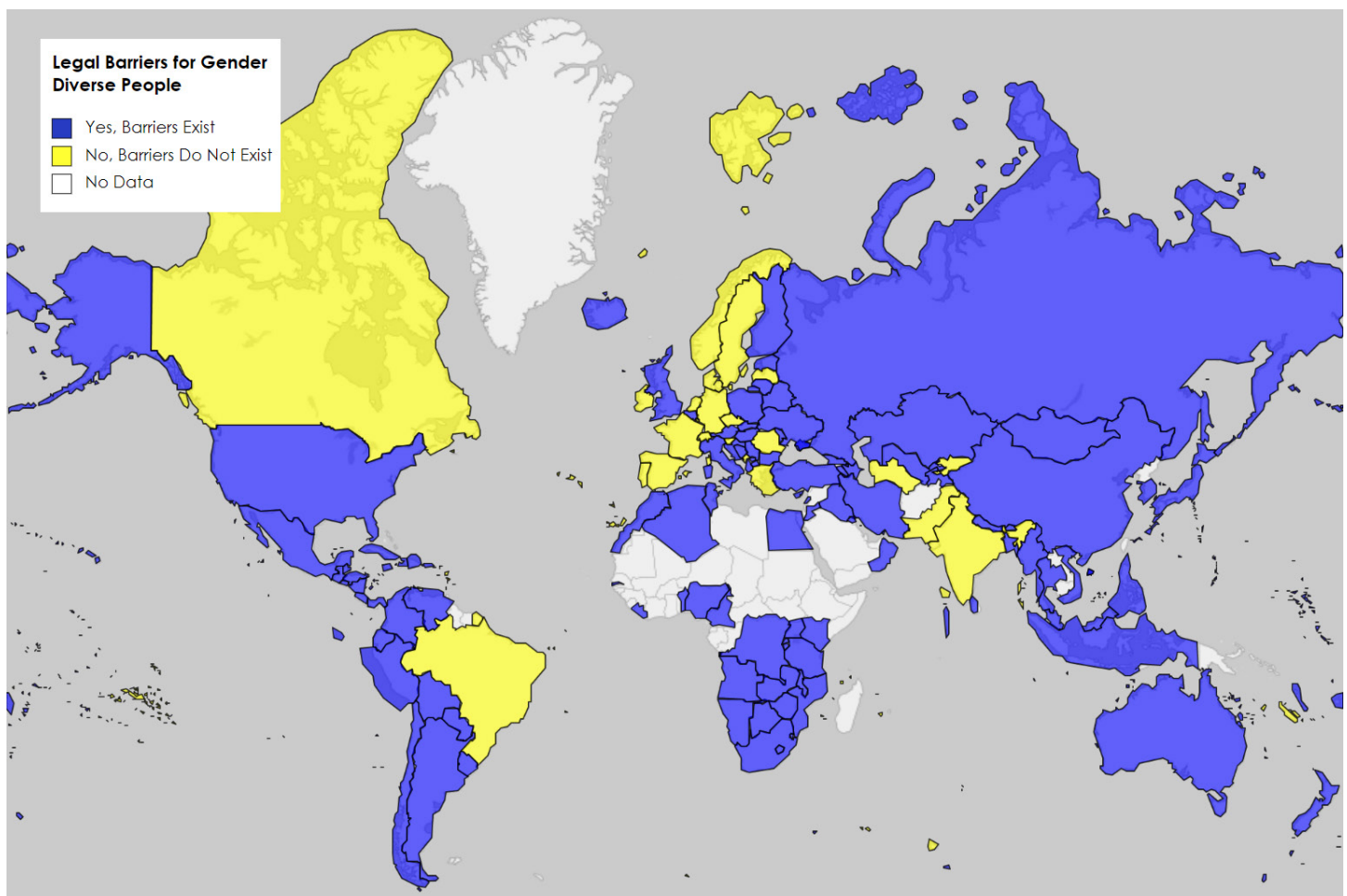
### BACKGROUND:

- In an effort to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, the United Nations endorsed gender mainstreaming in 1997. Gender mainstreaming is defined as: "The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."<sup>1</sup>
- Legal barriers to gender diversity exist across the world including the ability to change one's name and/or gender marker, and whether laws are used specifically against transgender and gender diverse people (see map).

- In June 2016, the UN Human Rights Council implemented a mandate of an Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. This mandate was renewed in 2019. In 2018, the Independent Expert advised that binary gender systems are "misconceptions" and that people who identify as gender nonbinary or as transgender are especially vulnerable when states do not recognize diverse gender identities.<sup>2</sup>

"Gender mainstreaming may have the unintended consequence of repeating histories of gendered violence by promoting binary gender norms."

- During civil wars, nonbinary gender populations and women are often even more disempowered than in times of peace, suffering violence and disparities.<sup>3</sup> Part of downstream efforts of atrocity prevention means attending to these disparities.





- Global instruments, including the Genocide Convention, fail to recognize diverse genders in their consideration of the violence perpetrated against LGBTQ persons.<sup>4</sup>
- To implement gender mainstreaming, various funding streams incentivize the hiring of women such as the Geneva Institute for Humanitarian Demining which funds over 31 countries. Gender mainstreaming has become an important aspect of funding postwar development efforts like demining.<sup>5</sup>
- Recent studies of gender have outlined how gender exists neither biologically nor culturally in binaries.<sup>6</sup> In countries like Cambodia, one of the most densely contaminated countries in the world, gender exists in three categorizations. The third gender, for example, is widely recognized in most of Southeast Asia.<sup>7</sup>
- Gender mainstreaming results in third gender people being deliberately misgendered on their work files even in downstream atrocity prevention efforts such as the decontamination of military waste post-civil war.

## DISCUSSION:

Gender mainstreaming may have the unintended consequence of repeating histories of gendered violence by promoting binary gender norms. State authorities receive implicit approval from entities like the UN to enforce binary gender norms and misgender workers on the ground. When gender mainstreaming bases its incentives on binary gender systems, organizations are incentivized to misgender those people who fall outside such systems. Gender mainstreaming relies on binary systems of gender in its implementation, which runs counter to the Independent Expert reports on sexual and gender identity. The reports advise that States legally recognize diverse genders and yet, gender mainstreaming relies on only binary system recognitions. There is thus a gap between the advice on sexual orientation and gender identities

and the mandates for gender mainstreaming. This is especially important for states where there has been a history of violence against transgender and gender-nonconforming people or individuals with other queer identities, and women.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The language in the United Nations gender mainstreaming policies should be revised to be less binary-oriented, allowing for gender identities that do not fit into binary norms. The UN is well-placed to revise such policies, allowing for improved gender equality worldwide. When gender mainstreaming is written in as a policy recommendation, it should use gender identifiers allowing for 'transmen,' 'transwomen,' 'ciswomen,' as well as 'nonbinary' as genders terms to be included within gender mainstreaming processes.
- The Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity should be consulted on the best ways to revise forms that acknowledge nonbinary genders.
- States should be incentivized to acknowledge diverse genders by the altered language of a more inclusive gender mainstreaming mandate. Women as well as nonbinary genders should be referenced in this mandate.
- NGOs should officially acknowledge the gender identities of their employees, regardless of the official sanctioned categories. This means, when possible, allowing for all-gender bathrooms and designating nonbinary genders as an official category in paperwork.
- Independent researchers should investigate how many diverse gender candidates may be excluded when hiring according to gender mainstreaming initiatives that empower only ciswomen. Research should also investigate how many staff end up being misgendered and/or unacknowledged due to these initiatives.

### Principal Researcher:



**Dr. Darcie DeAngelo** is a medical anthropologist with training in sensory ethnography. Her area of focus is on landmine detection industries in Cambodia, especially those that work with animal detection aids. She is dedicated to engaged studies and has conducted research in diverse fields from public mental health disparities to international policy. She is currently a Charles E. Scheidt postdoctoral fellow at the Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention at Binghamton University, New York, a member of the policy-scholar team at the Mansfield-Luce Asia Foundation, and a 2021 Wilson China Fellow.

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