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Regional issues**Socioeconomic impact of conflict on women and girls in the Arab region****Summary**

This paper examines the socioeconomic consequences of armed conflict on women and girls in the Arab region. It analyses the distinct ways in which women and girls are affected by war and civil unrest, thus laying the foundation for future research on the impact of conflict on women and girls beyond gender-based violence. The paper also discusses the transformations in gender relations resulting from armed conflict, especially changes in the division of labour between women and men, and the subsequent impact on gender identities, gender institutions and gender ideologies.

Conflict-stricken States face bigger challenges in implementing relevant international legal and policy instruments on development and the rights of women and girls. This paper provides insight on the ways through which Arab States can reflect the impact of conflict on women and girls in their national strategies to reach the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goal 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

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Introduction

1. Armed conflicts challenge the status quo and lead to profound transformations in societies. They bear serious implications on all areas of economic and social development, though the consequences of war and civil unrest may vary depending on the circumstances and the type of conflict. In the Arab region, armed conflicts have led to humanitarian crises which are among the most severe since World War II.¹ The numbers of refugees, internally displaced persons and people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance are striking. In the Syrian Arab Republic, conflict has driven over 4 million people out of their homes. Yemen registers 1.27 million internally displaced people. Iraq has a total of 3.6 million displaced persons. A large number of Palestinian refugees who had been residing in the Syrian Arab Republic became doubly displaced as a result of conflict.²

2. There are also gender-specific consequences of armed conflict. First, women and girls can be differently or disproportionately affected by armed conflict in comparison to men, due to pre-existing gender inequalities and vulnerabilities.³ Secondly, armed conflicts may provide a platform for temporary change in gender relations, in particular in terms of gender roles and division of labour. As an increasing number of families are displaced and men are away fighting at the front line, women may have to start assuming new responsibilities that had fallen within the male domain before. While their traditional role as caretakers increases because of the lack of services and the need to attend to injured or disabled family members, women may also become the main breadwinner of a household.⁴ Furthermore, they may even take charge of humanitarian aid distribution.

3. This new division of labour between the genders influences gender identities and can produce changes in expected patterns of behaviour. Therefore, conflicts can, paradoxically, open new opportunities for female participation and involvement in a range of functions and activities, though women can also experience backlash because of such change. Women may, in particular, have a stronger say over resources and in decision-making. However, such transformation in gender roles is often temporary. Once the conflict ends, women tend to be called back to their traditional roles, showing that there had been no long-term change in gender ideologies and institutions.⁵

4. There are various ways through which conflicts may have a specific, gendered impact on women. In times of war or emergency, women are at higher risk of gender-based violence, with female humanitarian workers and community leaders being particularly exposed to public assault, harassment, abduction, and torture. Women and girls may be deprived from some of their fundamental rights, such as access to health care, education, nutrition, and even their right to transfer their nationality to their children, all because of armed conflict. They are increasingly exposed to poverty and unemployment. Gaps in law enforcement and the security void created by conflict also threatens the safety of women and girls, and places severe restrictions on their freedom of movement. In such context, displaced women and girls are more likely to be exposed to various types of sexual, physical and psychological exploitation, trafficking, rape, forced prostitution, unwanted pregnancy, and forced marriage, including child marriage, in many occasions. Such abuses have long-term consequences on the well-being of women survivors and their families.

5. The above-mentioned gender-specific consequences of conflict need to be addressed through specific interventions, as well as through the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all sectors of humanitarian

¹ UN Women, 2015a, p. 22.

² All figures in this paragraph are from ESCWA, 2015a, pp. 4-5.

³ UN Women, 2015a, p. 68.

⁴ Human Rights Watch, 2014.

⁵ El-Bushra and Sahl, 2005, p. 57.

programmes.⁶ Since some of the most serious effects of conflict experienced by women and girls take their roots in pre-existing gender inequalities and vulnerabilities, it is also important to consider gender inequalities at each stage of conflict.⁷ The present document examines in detail the various effects of armed conflict on women and girls in war zones and on those who have been internally or externally displaced.⁸ It offers a brief overview of the relevant legal and policy framework, and highlights key considerations in order to formulate effective strategies to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking into account the threats to gender equality and women's empowerment that are posed by conflict.

I. SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF CONFLICTS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS

6. This section analyses the socioeconomic impact of conflicts on women and girls in the Arab region. It examines the consequences of war and civil unrest on female poverty and income; access to health care; access to education; and gender-based violence.

A. POVERTY AND LIVELIHOODS

7. Armed conflict heightens poverty, as national economies sink and individuals are deprived of their livelihoods. Populations living in conflict-affected areas, as well as refugees or internally displaced people who have fled war zones, are usually not able to secure basic needs such as food, water and shelter. The breakdown of infrastructure (including roads, electricity and water supply) makes living conditions even more precarious. In this sense, the World Bank estimates that in a "typical civil war of seven years duration, incomes would be around 15 per cent lower than had the war not happened, implying an approximately 30 per cent increase in the incidence of absolute poverty".⁹

8. The dire circumstances characterizing poverty affect both women and men. For example, statistics available for Palestine suggest that poverty rates are equivalent for men and women, standing at 25.5 and 26.2 per cent, respectively.¹⁰ However, pre-existing power imbalances and disparities in status and needs imply that women and girls may be more severely hit by poverty than men. In such situations, social protection systems and basic services are either non-existent or very weak, which makes it difficult for vulnerable groups to access economic resources, have job opportunities and maintain control over personally owned assets. Moreover, there is a gap between resources available and personal needs in conflict settings since most of the resources to which women and girls have access do not meet their basic needs. Therefore, the number of women who fall into the trap of poverty and vulnerability increases significantly in times of conflict.

9. The relationship between poverty and food security – which is understood in terms of availability of food to the whole population, and access to products guaranteeing minimum nutrition standards – is inseparable. During armed conflicts and occupation, the decrease in overall agricultural production, combined with restrictions on mobility and trade, may impact the availability of food products. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation can also be a particular challenge due to the damage in infrastructure, poor living conditions in refugee camps, and the contamination of water, air and soil. Moreover, armed conflict may cause significant environmental damage, which can seriously impact agriculture and land use, and therefore food security in general.

⁶ Inter-Agency Standing Committee and Global Protection Cluster, 2015.

⁷ UN Women, 2015a, p. 207.

⁸ Internally displaced persons are those who remain within the borders of their own countries and are thus under the jurisdiction of their Government and subsequently are not granted any rights additional to those enjoyed by their compatriots; while refugees, or externally displaced people, flee from their own country to another one and, according to their status, are entitled to certain rights.

⁹ World Bank, 2003, p. 17.

¹⁰ For more information, see, ESCWA, 2015f.

10. In this context, women are seriously affected by the inability of getting safe and sufficient nutritious food. Pregnant and lactating women, for instance, are particularly affected by food scarcity and the lack of a balanced and nutritious diet. Statistical information on this exact topic is difficult to find in conflict-stricken Arab countries. However, available data illustrate the extent of deprivation encountered by women and girls. Two thirds of Syrian female refugee-headed households living in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon declare that they do not have enough to eat.¹¹ Moreover, many female-headed households are likely to be food-insecure given the lack of capital and experience in a context without State infrastructure, where commerce and agricultural products are scarce and insecurity is profoundly imbedded in the environment.¹²

11. In the face of such challenges, women may be forced to accept menial jobs, which they often perform under difficult conditions and in the absence of a formal contract and social protection. They may also get involved in petty trade and small-scale income-generating activities to cope with the unmet needs resulting from the absence of the man or his unemployment. The lack of documentation, together with restrictions on access to work for refugees, usually prevents women from getting decent jobs. In Lebanon, for example, 68 per cent of female Syrian refugees are unemployed.¹³ These conditions make women particularly vulnerable to all sorts of abuse, and they may find themselves compelled to resort to forced, early and child marriage or transactional sex as a coping strategy. This increases the exposure of women and girls to sexually transmitted diseases and the transmission of HIV, as well as any type of sexual, physical and psychological abuse.¹⁴

12. Poverty resulting from armed conflict and displacement may force women to become more involved in informal work, implying a temporary transformation of gender roles. As a result, many women are confronted with the challenge of assuming the role of breadwinner, in addition to their traditional role of caregiver, to secure a minimum income for their families. The circumstances of conflict, however, significantly increase the amount of unpaid work expected of women.¹⁵ The collapse of infrastructure, particularly as regards child and health-care facilities, adds to the burden of women – especially if at least one family member has been injured or maimed at war.

13. Yet, many women do become the main breadwinners and persons responsible for securing livelihood for their families, as is illustrated by the Syrian case. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that a quarter of Syrian refugee households are currently headed by women.¹⁶ In Yemen, between 20 and 30 per cent of internally displaced households are headed by women, in contrast with 9 per cent before the start of the conflict.¹⁷ The vast majority of active female Syrian refugees in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon work in education, childcare, sewing, handicraft, agriculture, and hairdressing.¹⁸ Refugee and displaced women typically work in the informal sector, as is the case in Jordan, where 92 per cent of them are involved in informal work.¹⁹ Increased poverty in times of conflict might also force women to liquidate their savings or other assets, such as their jewelry, which impacts their financial autonomy in the long run. Patterns of women selling their jewelry and the few assets that they might own

¹¹ UNHCR, 2014, p. 18.

¹² El-Bushra and Sahl, 2005, p. 54.

¹³ ESCWA, 2015b, p. 37.

¹⁴ UNHCR, 2014, p. 37.

¹⁵ Olmsted, 2004, pp. 1-4.

¹⁶ UNHCR, 2014, p. 9.

¹⁷ Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2015, p. 1.

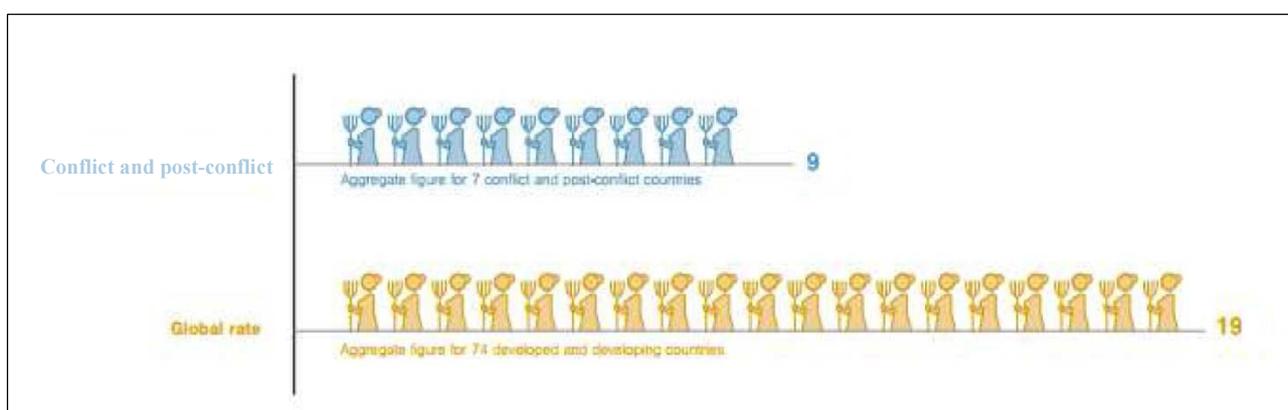
¹⁸ UNHCR, 2014, p. 30.

¹⁹ ILO, 2015, p. 88.

were evident among Lebanese women during the time of civil war. The same pattern was repeated among Palestinian women to survive the worsening economic conditions during the period 2001-2003.²⁰

14. Gender norms and discriminatory laws can have serious implications for women during armed conflict. Women's access to economic resources and land ownership is often restricted, which has major consequences for women working in the agricultural sector. Since land occupation often becomes a war strategy, female landowners may find themselves in a weaker position to fight violations of their property. This holds especially true for young, widowed, single, and divorced women, as well as for women who have been raped and ex-combatants.²¹ Women's limited access to land is reinforced further by the prevailing cultural, religious and customary practices, which perpetuate their dependence on men and reinforce the pre-existing gender power relations. Figure 1 shows that the global rate of female agricultural landowners decreases by 10 per cent in conflict and post-conflict settings.

Figure 1. Incidence of female agricultural landowners (legal titles), 2014
(Percentage)



Source: UN-Women, 2015a, p. 82.

B. ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

15. In conflict settings, the breakdown of the health infrastructure provokes more deaths than the fight itself.²² As a consequence of armed conflicts, health facilities are damaged and the availability and accessibility of health services and supplies compromised. Apart from their limited provision, the services that are delivered despite the presence of a conflict decrease in quality. The flight of medical professionals, as it has been witnessed in Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic, puts additional strain on health systems.²³ Epidemic and communicable diseases are more frequent, and more people suffering from chronic conditions die because of limited access to health care and treatment. Women and girls have different health needs than men, which require specific attention. Therefore, the limited availability of health services and supplies in emergencies can have a serious impact on women and girls. This might result in an increasing number of illnesses which are specific for or more frequent in female populations, such as anemia, menstrual problems, and vaginal and urinary tract infections.²⁴ Moreover, support needed by women and girls during menstruation and the lactation period might not be available. Contraceptives, sex education and gynecologists are difficult to find in conflict and humanitarian settings and, even if available, there is a lack of training in relevant issues such as the clinical management of rape.

²⁰ UN Women, 2014, p. 72.

²¹ UN Women, 2015a, p. 81.

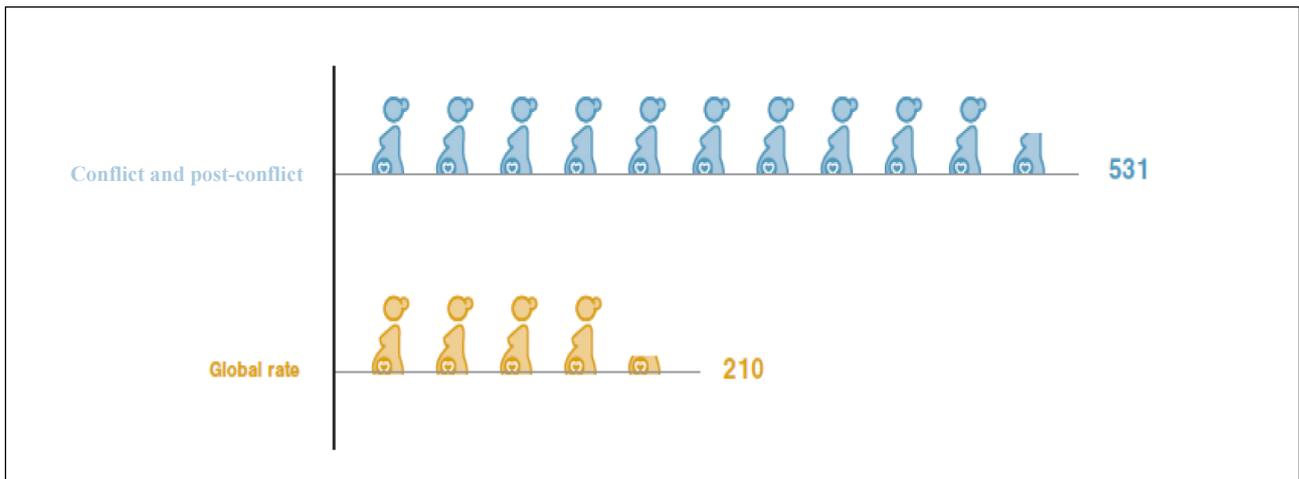
²² ESCWA, 2015a, p. 21.

²³ UN Women, 2015a, p. 78.

²⁴ ESCWA, 2013, p. 8.

16. Restricted health-care services for women living in warzones and for those who are internally and externally displaced lead to a sharp increase in maternal mortality rates. In conflict-stricken areas, this is a result of the destruction of infrastructure and the lack of capacity due to the high number of casualties, while, in such host countries as Lebanon, due to the absence of a clear legal framework regulating the status of refugees, displaced persons do not enjoy a special legal status but are rather treated as foreigners and, as a result, may not be granted access to all basic services. Over half of maternal deaths worldwide happen in conflict contexts, most of which are preventable when adequate means are provided. In 2013, maternal mortality rates (deaths per 100,000 live births) were approximately 2.5 times higher in conflict and post-conflict settings than the average maternal mortality rate at the global level²⁵ (figure 2).

Figure 2. Maternal mortality ratio, deaths per 100,000 live births: 2013 estimates



Source: UN-Women, 2015a, p. 77.

C. EDUCATION

17. The education sector undergoes major transformations in the wake of a conflict. School infrastructure may be damaged by ongoing fighting or become used for other purposes. In the Syrian Arab Republic, for example, one in five schools stopped functioning as a result of civil strife, and it is estimated that about 1,500 educational institutions have so far been converted into shelters or military bases. In Gaza, fighting in 2014 caused the damage to and destruction of 66 per cent of school facilities.²⁶ Though the closing down of schools in certain neighbourhoods affects both boys and girls, it is more likely that girls will not go to another school for safety reasons. This poses significant obstacles for girls to access education, which makes it harder for them to break the cycle of poverty and secure better opportunities in the future; and even has implications on the reconstruction and peace-building period.

18. Conflict has negative implications on the gender gap in education. Girls suffer most from the consequences of breakdowns in the educational infrastructure due to widespread insecurity and the risk of being targeted on their way to school. Child labour constitutes another factor that keeps girls away from school. Refugee and displaced girls may have to abandon their education in view of financial difficulties encountered by their families. They can be required to start working, get involved in household chores and take care of other family members, which may prevent them from attending school. Although sex-disaggregated data is hard to find, globally, it is estimated that, on average, net enrolment ratios for girls in primary school are 15 per cent lower in conflict and post-conflict countries.²⁷ In the Arab region, the shares

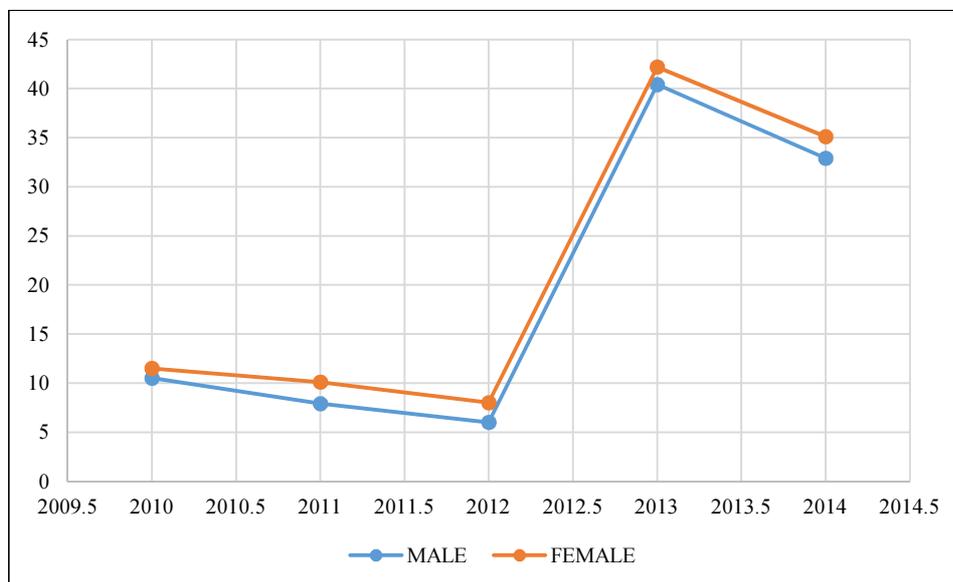
²⁵ UN Women, 2015a, p. 78.

²⁶ UN Women, 2015a, p. 79.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 80.

of Syrian girls refugees enrolled in schools in Jordan and Lebanon, for example, are as low as 50 and 30 per cent, respectively.²⁸ The drop-out rate from secondary education among Syrian girls experienced an increase by 36.2 per cent between 2012 and 2013, as shown in figure 3.

Figure 3. Out-of-school rate of adolescents in the Syrian Arab Republic
(Percentage)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics. <http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?quervid=124>.

D. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

19. In conflict settings, the risk of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, early or forced marriage, physical abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and torture is heightened. During such times, in particular acts of sexual violence are frequently used as warfare tools committed by armed groups and local men.²⁹ Domestic violence motivated by the frustration experienced by men in the wake of the new gender roles also becomes widespread. As another result of the conflict, national prevention and protection systems are usually weakened and many wrongdoings go unpunished.³⁰

20. The various forms of gender-based violence experienced by women leave a strong social stigma on the victims, which, in many situations, would require psychological support that is rarely available in times of conflict and emergency. Survivors of sexual violence may suffer life-long health consequences, such as fistula and dysfunctions related to urination, defecation or sexual activity; and they are vulnerable to sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Medical doctors, when available, may not be trained in the clinical management of rape. Consequently, women may experience unwanted pregnancies and face the difficult choice of either seeking an abortion under unsafe conditions or carrying their baby with often very limited financial resources and at the risk of being ostracized as single mothers.³¹

21. Such acts of violence against women are not systematically punished. The fear of being stigmatized prevents many women from reporting acts of violence that they have suffered. Poor health and police

²⁸ ESCWA, 2015d, p. 73.

²⁹ ESCWA, 2013, p. 3.

³⁰ UNFPA, 2015, p. 9.

³¹ UN Women, 2015a, pp. 76-78.

services provided during conflict further discourage women from reporting acts of sexual violence. A survey conducted in Iraq showed, for example, that less than 3 per cent of women were ready to report acts of violence to the police because they feared to “create a scandal” (51 per cent), they believed that the police would not be able to do justice (31 per cent) or they suspected that the police might even try to take advantage of them (17 per cent).³²

22. These conditions of insecurity, combined with poverty, may lead families to look for new survival strategies, including forced and child marriage with the hope to improve the chances of their daughters to a better life. The proportion of Syrian girls married before reaching the age of 18 has risen to nearly 50 per cent since the start of the conflict. Other conflict-stricken Arab countries, including Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen, still rank highest regarding child marriage, registering around 30 per cent of women who were married before the age of 18.³³ Using child marriage as a survival mechanism during times of conflict places young girls in a more vulnerable situation because they are more likely to drop out of school, face health risks, and be abused.

23. Female activists are more vulnerable to abuse during arbitrary arrest and detention. In particular cases, such as the Syrian conflict, women have been arbitrarily detained for having provided assistance or humanitarian aid to civilians affiliated with opposing groups. The practice of torture and extended periods of detention are illegal and represent a breach of international human rights. In the event of a systematic attack and detention of civilian population, torture can even be considered a crime against humanity.³⁴

II. KEY CONSIDERATIONS TO REFLECT THE CONFLICT DIMENSION IN STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE 2030 AGENDA, IN PARTICULAR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5

24. Two bodies of international law, namely conventions on human rights, on the one hand, and the Geneva conventions and their additional protocols, on the other hand, constitute the legal basis for ensuring the rights and conditions for women and girls in conflict settings. International humanitarian law, in particular, identifies the responsibilities of States and provides safeguards for the protection of civilians. A key convention at the regional level is the Arab Charter on Human Rights. Those legally binding instruments are complemented by a series of policy frameworks that seek to guarantee the rights of women and girls in times of conflict. One of the most important tools is the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and the subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security, which Arab States have endeavoured to implement through the adoption of the Regional Strategy on the Protection of Arab Women: Peace and Security and the Strategic Framework for the Regional Action Plan for the period 2015-2030.

25. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents a milestone towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the next fifteen years. Its section on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular, delineates a set of targets that all States are expected to achieve by 2030. Since they are anchored in the field of development rather than humanitarian assistance, the SDGs and their related targets do not specifically distinguish between peace and conflict settings, though they highlight the impact of armed conflict on development and acknowledge the challenges of conflict-ridden countries. It is, therefore, important that member States identify the specific development challenges posed by political instability and armed conflict at an early stage, together with ways to mitigate the possible effects of the influx of refugees on host communities. National women’s machineries, in particular, should ensure that gender-specific consequences of conflict are given adequate attention and taken into account in the elaboration of national strategies to realize the 2030 Agenda.

³² Puttick, 2015, p. 22.

³³ ESCWA, 2015d, p. 6.

³⁴ Human Rights Watch, 2014.

26. SDG 5 offers a broad framework for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. It includes a series of targets which are relevant to conflict-ridden countries, but which may need to be further defined based on national needs. Target 5.2 on eliminating all forms of violence against women can provide a basis for prevention and protection programmes in emergency settings. Within the context of target 5.3 on child marriage, member States should seek to develop legal and institutional frameworks, as relevant, in order to eliminate child and forced marriages, which tend to increase in times of armed conflict. As explained earlier in this paper, finding access to sexual and reproductive health services may be particularly challenging during political unrest. This particular aspect of women's rights falls within the context of national strategies to reach target 5.6 of the 2030 Agenda, which claims universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

27. The global indicators that are currently being developed and expected to be adopted at the 47th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2016 may provide additional guidance for the effective implementation of gender-related targets within the framework of the SDGs. However, it is important to note that those indicators are only developed for the purpose of follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They should not place restrictions on the broad and ambitious nature of the SDGs and related targets. For example, the indicator proposed to monitor implementation of target 5.5 regarding women's full and effective participation at all levels of decision-making pertains only to the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.³⁵ Arab States may wish to reflect their commitment to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) by also reporting, at the national level, on mechanisms that they have put in place to ensure the participation of women in peace negotiations or transitional justice processes. Likewise, data collected to monitor the implementation of SDGs should not only be disaggregated by sex, but also by further components such as age, socioeconomic characteristics, income, location (rural/urban), social class, and belonging to a vulnerable or minority group, as relevant.³⁶ This additional level of detail in data could provide very valuable information in the analysis of the status of women in times of conflict and emergency.

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

28. The current conflict-ridden context in the Arab region is determining the opportunities, resources, choices, and general fate of men and women. Since gender relations underpin the scenario in which social, economic and political interactions take place, conflicts directly intertwine with the gender dimension, thus establishing the role and participation of men and women in the conflict and determining the extent to which they are influenced by its impacts.

29. Conflicts affect both men and women; however, their impacts are more severe on women and girls, aggravating pre-existing gender imbalances in Arab societal structure. Conflicts have a strong influence on gender relations, which results in a significant change in traditional gender roles, the division of labour, and other alterations in gender structures and identities. However, impacts of conflicts do not result in major transformations in societal behaviour. In other words, conflicts entail temporary transformations in daily life, but they do not transform gender ideologies underpinning structural attitudes in society in the long term.

30. Within this complex framework, conflicts have various socioeconomic impacts on men and women. They are the main reason for the destruction of infrastructures and the lack of access to and availability of services and resources. As a main consequence, conflicts make women and men undergo a process of impoverishment that limits their opportunities to meet basic needs. They face bigger challenges to overcome poverty and assure livelihoods for their families, pursue education, access health care, enjoy full sexual and reproductive rights, and preserve their physical and psychological well-being.

³⁵ UN Stats, IAEG-SDGS, 2015a.

³⁶ UN Women, 2015b, p. 2.

31. Furthermore, the economic stress experienced in conflict and humanitarian settings forces women and girls to seek new ways to meet the needs of the family, which might push them to drop out of school and expose them to abusive situations such as child marriage or trafficking. As a result, their safety is compromised, and they become vulnerable to different types of gender-based violence, such as sexual violence, trafficking, slavery, and prostitution. This, in turn, leads to reduced mobility, unwanted pregnancy, social stigmatization, and the contraction of HIV and other infectious diseases, among others, which, might result in social ostracism or rejection within the community.

32. Conflict is one of the main reasons for external and internal displacements. The absence of men, which is common in such settings, results in a shift in gender roles, with women taking on additional duties as heads of households, at the same time providing care to injured or disabled relatives in accordance with established gender roles. This scenario contains potential improvement since the transformation in gender roles can improve temporarily women's access to resources and decision-making. However, this new platform for the participation of women might lose its dynamics when the patriarchal system forces women to sacrifice their resources in order to avert poverty. It might also result in higher violence perpetrated by men who are motivated by their inability to adjust to those sudden changes in gender roles.

33. The analysis of the socioeconomic impacts of conflicts on women and girls points at the challenges related to the protection and safety of women and girls in situations of conflict and displacement. The complex dynamics resulting from the interplay between conflict and gender make it essential that member States take adequate measures at both the legislative and the institutional levels. This would allow them to enact the relevant instruments and adopt the necessary mechanisms and strategies to effectively address the impacts of conflicts on women and girls.

34. At the legislative level, member States should enact laws to effectively combat all forms of violence against women and girls. They should ratify relevant international and regional conventions and amend all discriminatory legislation accordingly. Furthermore, member States should ensure the effective application of already existing provisions and clauses granting equal rights to men and women.

35. At the institutional level, national action plans should be developed to ensure effective implementation of international instruments on rights of women and girls in conflict settings. Such national action plans should set their objectives by adopting an inclusive and interdisciplinary framework allowing member States to better understand conflict and its impacts on both men and women. Member States should establish adequate mechanisms to guarantee the effective implementation of international instruments for the protection of women and girls in conflict settings. Moreover, and in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, member States should develop national indicators to ensure the effective implementation and monitor progress made towards achieving the internationally agreed targets.

36. Gender-specific programmes and accountability mechanisms, including the adoption of gender-responsive budgets, will be particularly important to eliminate gender-blind policies and inequitable laws and regulations in the Arab region. The involvement of civil society organizations represents an opportunity to establish and strengthen regional coordination mechanisms resulting in more coherent and complementary policies and actions in favour of the prevention and protection of the rights of women and girls in conflict settings. It will be essential that such programmes move beyond protection issues to also cover additional important areas of intervention in times of conflict and emergency, such as livelihoods and access to employment.

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