

# Human Rights Council

The question of women in areas of conflict





<b>Forum:</b>	Human Rights Council
<b>Issue:</b>	The question of women in areas of conflict
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## Introduction

As the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon stated, “Protecting and empowering women during and after conflicts is one of the most important challenges of our time.” Women, more than men, face sufferings engendered by armed conflict.

The impact of armed conflicts upon women is huge. More and more, women have specifically been targeted by attacks in conflict zones. In addition, they are vulnerable to the sufferings caused by armed conflict, they are often marginalised or treated as inferior. Women in refugee and Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps face rape, a lack of physical security and sexual exploitation.



Over the years, the UN has made considerable progress in promoting gender equality, through means such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The achievement of gender equality has significant socio-economic consequences, including the thriving of economies. However, women worldwide still suffer from violence and discrimination, they are too little represented in economic and political decision-making processes and often lack access to basic health care and education, especially in areas of conflict.

In spite of the current situation, “women are the best drivers of growth, the best hope for reconciliation in conflict and the best buffer against the radicalisation of youth and the repetition of cycles of violence,” as said by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Executive Director of UN Women. Therefore, it is important to elaborate on ways to improve the current situation.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Conflict

The word 'conflict' is derived from the Latin verb 'conficere', which means "to engage in a fight". A conflict can be described as a confrontation between two or more parties with competitive or incompatible aims. Conflicts might lead to violence, although they can also end mutually satisfactory. There are three general forms of conflict: interstate conflicts, which include disputes between nations over, for example, disputed territories or energy sources, intra-state or internal conflicts, which include ethnic wars, anti-colonial struggles and civil conflicts caused by political crises, economic distress or inequalities, which can lead to a lack of government legitimacy and can stimulate the creation of armed criminal groups, and trans-state conflicts, which are international and can include international terrorism, cyber-attacks and economic sabotage.

### Post-conflict

Post-conflict is a situation in which public or open warfare has come to an end. Such situations can easily face a relapse of large-scale violence.

### Gender analysis

Gender analysis concentrates on the capacities and skills of men and women, distinguishes the division of labour within the household and reveals the constraints men and women face during periods of quick change. Gender analysis explores the differences between men and women so policies, projects and programmes can identify and meet their different needs. Gender analysis also focuses on the strategic use of distinct skills and knowledge possessed by women and men. Gender analysis includes assessing all implications for women and men of actions including policies, legislation or programmes at all levels and in all areas.

### Gender equality

Gender equality means that men and women have the same conditions for the realisation of their complete human rights and for their contribution to, and benefit from political, social, economic and cultural development. Thus, gender equality is the equal valuing of similarities and differences and the roles of men and women by society. It is based on a situation where women and men are equal partners in their home, their society and their community.

### Gender equity

Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, measures must often be applied to compensate for the social and historical disadvantages that prevent men and women from acting on an equal level. Equality is the result of equity.

### Empowerment

Empowerment is about people who are able to have control over their lives: setting their own agendas, building self-confidence, solving problems, gaining skills and developing self-reliance. No one is able to empower another person: only the individual is able to empower herself or himself to make his or her own choices. However, institutions including international cooperation agencies are able to support processes that can stimulate self-empowerment of individuals or groups.



## Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is a process Efforts to integrate gender into existing institutions of the mainstream often don't achieve a lot. We mainstream gender concerns in order to achieve gender equality and in order to ameliorate the relevance of development agendas. Such an approach shows that we all bear the costs of women's marginalization and gender inequalities.

## General Overview

During conflicts, the safety and security of individuals is threatened. There are three general forms of conflicts: interstate conflicts, which include disputes between nations over, for example, disputed territories or energy sources, internal or intra-state conflicts, which include ethnic wars, anti-colonial struggles and civil conflicts caused by political crises, economic distress or inequalities, which can lead to a lack of government legitimacy and can stimulate the creation of armed criminal groups, and trans-state conflicts, which are international and can include international terrorism, cyber-attacks and economic sabotage.

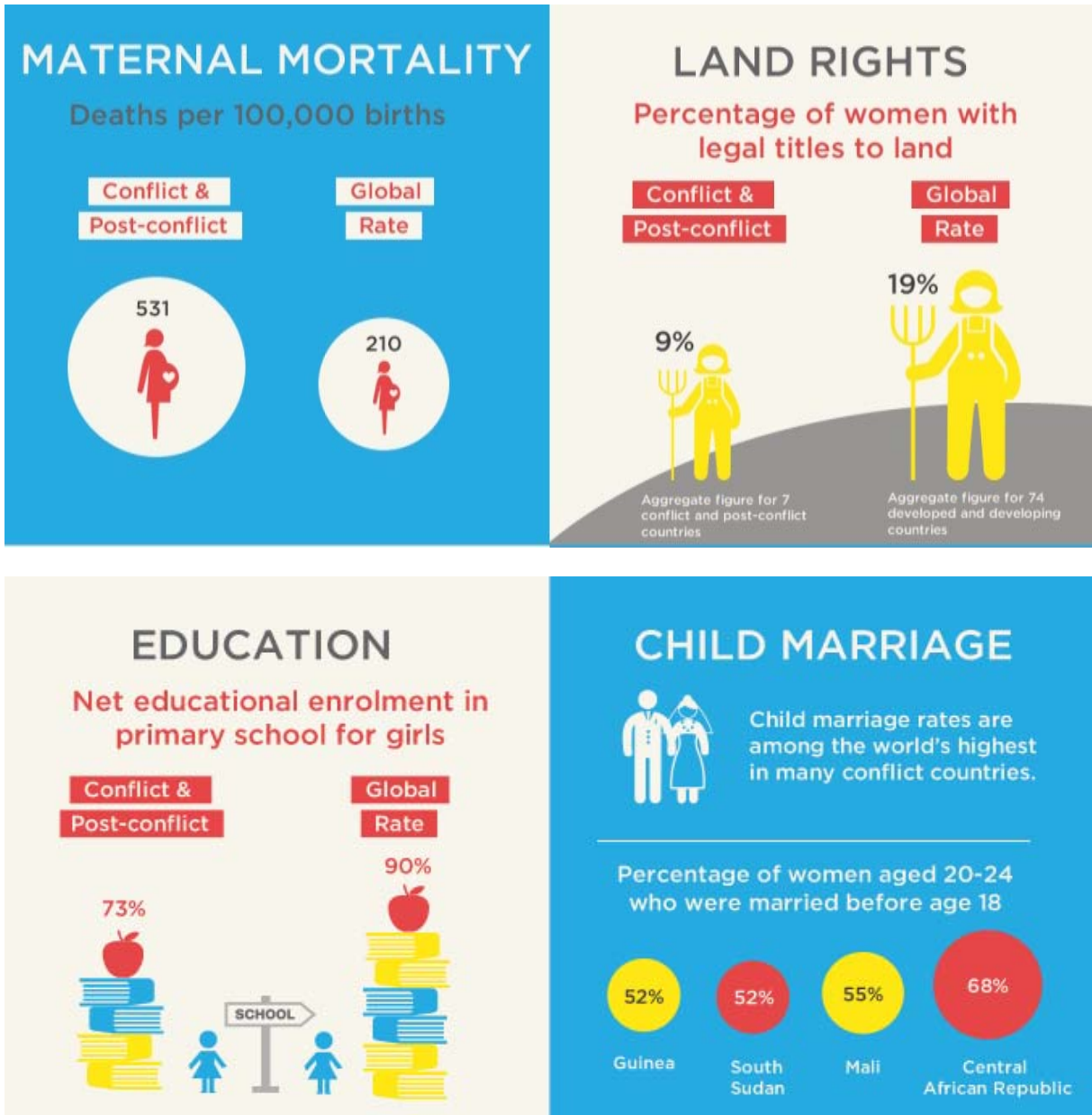
The impact of armed conflicts upon women is huge. More and more, women have become specific targets of attacks. In addition, they are vulnerable to the sufferings caused by armed conflict, they are often marginalised or treated as inferior. Women in refugee camps and Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps are subject to rape, lack of physical security and sexual exploitation.

Violence against women is one of the most common human rights violations in the world. It knows no national, social or economic boundaries. Globally around one in three women have experienced or will experience physical or sexual abuse in her life. Victims of sexual violence can suffer from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and psychical damage. Furthermore, it undermines the dignity, security and autonomy of its victims.



The United Nations Population Fund, previously the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) works to further gender equality and women’s emancipation, addresses the physical and psychological consequences of gender-based violence, offers psychosocial assistance, rape kits and medical treatment to victims of physical or sexual abuse and promotes the right of all women to live free of abuse and violence.

Aside from increased sexual violence, conflict increases many inequalities that could last well after a war ends. Here are a few examples.



Source: UN Women



Sustainable peace needs women's representation and leadership at every level of decision-making, including peace negotiations, the monitoring and implementation of peace agreements, post-conflict planning, recovery programmes, governments and parliaments, security and justice sectors, the administration of public services, transitional justice and peacekeeping missions.

UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, was created in 2010 by the UN General Assembly. It builds on the work of four formerly discriminative parts of the UN system which focused on gender equality and women's empowerment: the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). UN Women aims to support the formulation of policies and global standards by inter-governmental bodies, for example the Commission on the Status of Women. Moreover, it aids Member States in their implementations of these standards by providing financial and technical support. Subsequently, it coordinates the UN system's work on gender equality. UN Women works for the empowerment of women, the elimination of discrimination against women and the achievement of equality between men and women.



Source: UN Women

In areas of conflict, women may be more exposed to the danger of malnutrition since they are limited in their access to resources such as savings, land and animals. Post-conflict, women experience more vulnerability than men, having to cope with enlarged responsibility for caring for family members.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations has also set itself some targets in order to mainstream gender equity in its programmes for rehabilitation and emergency relief.

### **FAO's targets 2008-2013**

To mainstream gender equity in its programmes for emergency relief and rehabilitation, FAO has set itself the following targets to 2013:

#### **Early warning**

Address gender-related concerns in FAO special alerts on food supply difficulties and crop prospects, and mainstream gender into regional food security assessments.

#### **Identifying vulnerable households**

Use socio-economic and gender analysis to identify food insecure and vulnerable (e.g. female-headed, orphan-headed and elderly-headed) households as participants in emergency projects.

#### **Needs and livelihoods**

Address women's and men's different needs and household livelihoods in needs assessment and livelihood assessment guidelines.

#### **NGO partners**

Require that NGOs and other partners in agriculture emergency operations use gender-sensitive approaches, including sex-disaggregated data.

#### **Gender-based violence**

Specifically address the vulnerabilities of men, women, boys and girls (e.g. gender-based violence), in projects aimed at mitigating the vulnerability of populations displaced by emergencies.

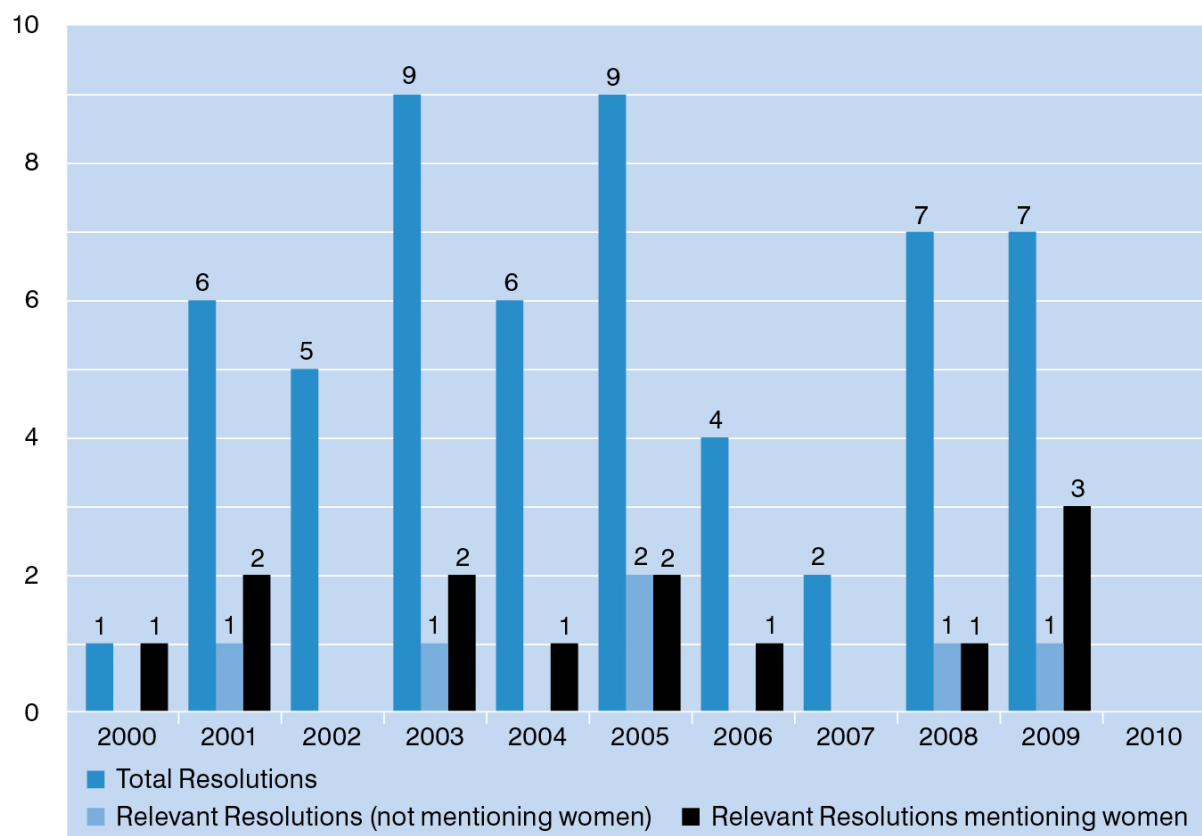
#### **Impact assessment**

When performing impact assessments, analyse how men and women in households benefit from emergency projects.

Source: <http://www.fao.org/gender/gender-home/gender-programme/gender-emergencies/en/>

Over the years, the UN has made considerable progress in promoting gender equality, including through agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The achievement of gender equality has significant socio-economic consequences, including the thriving of economies. However, women worldwide still suffer from violence and discrimination, they are under-represented in economic and political decision-making processes and are often lacking access to basic health care and education, especially in areas of conflict.





### *Resolutions of the Security Council concerning women.*

Women play a vital role in peace building and re-establishing security in post-conflict areas. Female peacekeepers can act as role models in the host community, promoting the image of women that can be empowered and can have authority, while being approachable to women in the local environment and providing a general sense of security, thus helping to reduce conflicts and confrontations. Nevertheless, a lot of women are still denied participation in various peace processes. Multiple attempts have been made to support a gender perspective in peace building, while increasing the representation of women on all levels of decision-making in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

Security Council resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, promotes the participation of women in multiple security and peace processes including peace negotiation and reintegration. It tries to ensure that women's needs are taken into account in the prevention of conflicts, in peacekeeping operations and in post-conflict recovery. It recommended Member States to increase the number of female peacekeepers and the number of female leaders dealing with issues of security and peace in the UN system as well as in national governments, thus empowering women through positive female role models.





## Major Parties Involved

### The Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is also known as the “Rape Capital of the World”. Sexual violence in this country has increased considerably since the armed conflicts of the 1990s.

### United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

The UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund, previously the United Nations Fund for Population Activities) works to further gender equality and women’s emancipation, addresses the physical and psychological consequences of gender-based violence, offers psychosocial assistance, rape kits and medical treatment to victims of physical or sexual abuse and promotes the right of all women to live free of abuse and violence.

### UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, was created in 2010 by the UN General Assembly. It builds on the work of four formerly discriminative parts of the UN system which focused on gender equality and women’s empowerment: the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). UN Women aims to support the formulation of policies and global standards by inter-governmental bodies, for example the Commission on the Status of Women. Moreover, it aids Member States in their implementations of these standards by providing financial and technical support. Subsequently, it coordinates the UN system’s work on gender equality. UN Women works for the empowerment of women, the elimination of discrimination against women and the achievement of equality between men and women.

### UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action)

The United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action) works to prevent every form of gender based violence, including sexual violence in areas of conflict. It aims to improve accountability and coordination and to support national efforts to prevent physical and sexual violence and respond suitably to the needs of victims.

### Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE)

The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) is a United Nations task force on women, peace and security.



## Timeline of Key Events

1979	Adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
1995	Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
2000	Adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on the issue of 'Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations'
2001-2007	Annual Security Council meetings on aspects of gender considerations in peace operations
2008	Adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1820 on Sexual Violence in Conflict
2009	Adoption of UN Security Council resolutions 1888 and 1889 on Women, Peace and Security
2010	Publication of the State of World Report From Conflict and Crisis to Renewal
2013	Adoption of UN Security Council resolutions 2122 and 2106 on Sexual Violence in Conflict



## Previous attempts to resolve the issue

United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, which was adopted in 2000, promotes the participation of women in multiple security and peace processes including peace negotiation and reintegration. It tries to ensure that women's needs are taken into account in the prevention of conflicts, in peacekeeping operations and in post-conflict recovery. It recommended Member States to increase the number of female peacekeepers and the number of female leaders dealing with issues of security and peace in the UN system as well as in national governments, thus empowering women through positive female role models.

Other UN resolutions and programmes on this issue include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which was adopted in 1979, UN Security Council Resolution 2122 on sexual violence in conflict, adopted in 2013, which enables women to participate in the resolution and recovery of conflicts, UN Security Council Resolution 2106 about sexual violence in conflict, also adopted in 2013, which strengthens efforts to put an end to sexual violence in conflict, the FAO Programme on Gender and Emergencies, the Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) for Emergency and Rehabilitation Programmes, the State of World Report From Conflict and Crisis to Renewal, published in 2010, UN Security Council Resolution 1889, which was adopted in 2009 and which condemns sexual violence against women in areas of conflict and post-conflict situations, UN Security Council Resolution 1888, adopted in 2009, which mandates peacekeeping operations to protect women from sexual violence in conflict, UN Security Council Resolution 1820 on sexual violence during wars, adopted in 2008, the UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was adopted in 1995, the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), and a publication in 2000 from the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) on mainstreaming a gender perspective in multidimensional peace operations.

Over the years, the UN has made considerable progress in promoting gender equality, including through these agreements, conventions and resolutions. The achievement of gender equality has significant socio-economic consequences, including the thriving of economies. Nevertheless, women worldwide still suffer from violence and discrimination, they are too little represented in economic and political decision-making processes and are often lacking access to basic health care and education, especially in areas of conflict.





## Possible Solutions

The first step in solving the issue of women in areas of conflict is the prevention of conflicts through, for example, mediation services, involvement to governments which are dealing with disputes or the establishment of missions in vulnerable states. In addition, Member States could focus on the management and resolution of conflicts, by, for example, establishing a decision-making mechanism or enhancing negotiations. Furthermore, in order to rehabilitate the post-conflict area, Member States could promote social rehabilitation and economic reconciliation by, for example, community cooperation to improve development, or the monitoring of socio-economic conditions.

Subsequently, it is necessary to advance further gender equality and women's empowerment. This could be done by additional gender analysis, promotion of gender-mainstreaming, addressing the physical and psychical consequences of gender-based violence or promotion of women's right to live free of abuse and violence.

Furthermore, it is recommended to elaborate on policies that provide women in conflict areas with protection and security.

Finally, sustainable peace needs women's leadership and representation at all levels of decision-making, including peace negotiations, the monitoring and implementation of peace agreements, post-conflict planning, recovery programmes, governments and parliaments, security and justice sectors, the administration of public services, transitional justice and peacekeeping missions.

## Appendix/Appendices

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