

## Unit 4: How Security Impacts Poverty and Gender

### Learning Objectives

#### How does gender impact safety in insecure environments?

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the security challenges facing women, children and the poor;
- Be familiar with statistics of gender-based violence;
- Understand the consequences for gender-based violence;
- Know some methods for fighting against gender violence and security's impact on poverty and gender.

### Introduction and Overview

Security problems ranging from local level crime to national security tend to impact women, children and the poor first and most aggressively. This unit provides an overview to the particular challenges facing these demographics in difficult times.

### Impact of Conflict on Vulnerable Groups

### Box 14: Sexual Violence in Conflict Situations

- During the 1992-1995 conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 20 000 and 50 000 Muslim women were raped (about 1.2 % of the total pre-war female population).
- A report by the U.N. (1996) Special Rapporteur on Rwanda estimated that at least 250 000 women were raped during the genocide.
- In Liberia, towards the end of the five year civil war, 49% of women (15 to 70 years) who were surveyed reported experiencing at least one act of physical or sexual violence by a soldier or fighter.

Sexual violence has always led to direct physical harm, emotional trauma, stigma, and social ostracism for women. It also carries an additional risk of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STI) and increasingly, of acquiring HIV infections. In conflict situations, being displaced facilitates civilian (especially women and girls') exposure to STI and HIV through sexual interactions - often forced - with high prevalence groups (e.g. combatants, military). In Rwanda, the HIV prevalence rate in rural areas dramatically increased from 1% before the start of the conflict in 1994 to 11% in 1997. In one survey, of the women who survived the genocide, 17% were found to be HIV positive.

#### Conclusions and Key Messages:

Violence against women, particularly sexual violence, is widespread in conflict settings. In such situations, women and girls face increased risks of acquiring STI and HIV by:

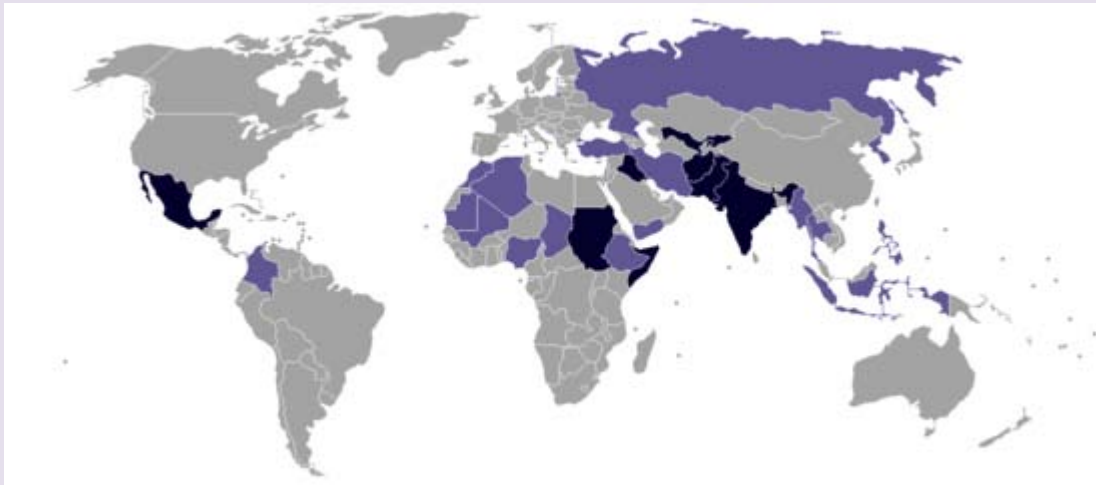
- Direct transmission through rape.
- Being placed in situations where they may be forced to exchange sex for survival.
- Experiencing increased levels of overall violence including intimate partner violence, which in turn, makes it difficult for them to negotiate safe sex in their relationships.

*Source: The Department of Gender, Women and Health (GWH) at The World Health Organization*

Conflict is one of the causes of poverty around the world due to displacement, destruction of infrastructure, collapse of social services, and violation of human rights. Conflict can result in high incidences of HIV/AIDS, violence, high infant mortality rates, poor water supply, as well as the compromise of other basic needs. As a result of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, for example, 64 % of the population now lives in poverty. While conflict affects all people, women and children are the most vulnerable --women are subjected to sexual violence and children may be abducted and forced to assume the role of soldiers against their will. Many women and girls in conflict situations are subjected to rape including gang rape, forced marriages with enemy soldiers, sexual slavery, and other forms of violence (being forced to witness others being raped,

mutilations, etc.). With no access to healthcare and little or no support system, women and girls' vulnerability to HIV is disproportionately increased. Violence against women and girls has been a feature of many recent conflicts, including that of the Darfur region of Sudan, the former Yugoslavia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, northern Uganda, and Chechnya (Russian Federation). Sometimes regarded as ethnic cleansing, rape is used as a deliberate strategy to brutalize and humiliate civilians and as a weapon of war or political power. It is also likely that all forms of violence against women, including intimate partner violence, increase during conflicts and this may be linked to a ready availability of weapons, high levels of frustration among men, and a general breakdown in law and order. In Rwanda, rape was used as a weapon of destruction and women now constitute the majority of the people living with HIV/AIDS, which affects their ability to effectively engage in productive activities.

### Box 15: Global Conflict Map



■ Major wars - 1000+ deaths per year

■ Other conflicts

Source: I ([Kermanshahi \(talk\)](#)) created this work entirely by myself.

In 2004, most countries in the Great Lakes region were placed in the bottom 30 of 177 countries measured in the Human Development Index. The extent of poverty and high incidence of HIV/AIDS in the region persuaded women parliamentarians in that region to convene a workshop on the **Fight Against Poverty in Post-Conflict Countries**. The workshop endorsed a resolution recommending:

- Establishment of regional network of MPs for the prevention and resolution of conflicts and fight against HIV/AIDS
- Regulations of microfinance by Central Banks to involve both stakeholders and beneficiaries in negotiations
- Respective governments include microfinance in NEPAD strategies for poverty eradication; and
- Establishment of a Regional Commission on HIV/AIDS

#### **Box 16: Facts about Violence Against Women**

- Among women aged 15 – 44 years, gender based violence accounts for more deaths among women than the combined effects of cancer, malaria, traffic injuries and war
- An estimated 90 percent of the people killed or wounded in armed conflict are civilians and of the 50 million displaced people worldwide, 80 percent are women and children; and
- An estimated 85 to 114 million women and girls have been subjected to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

A conference on “The Protection of Civilians” held at Wilton Park in February 2005, raised some thought-provoking questions on the issue of child soldiers. Demands for justice imply prosecution of the perpetrators of crimes against humanity, which includes fighters who may have been abducted at a young age. This raises the question as to whether or not child soldiers, who are victims of human rights violations themselves because of their forced recruitment into paramilitary services, should be prosecuted and how children can be protected from this gender-based human rights violation?

### **Box 17: Security sector reform (SSR)**

The institutions and organizations collectively responsible for ensuring the day-to-day security of women, men, boys and girls are commonly known as the security sector. It is commonly understood to include all the organizations that have the authority to use, or order the use of, force, or the threat of force, to protect individuals, communities and the state. This official security sector includes: international and regional forces (including peacekeeping missions), military, police, border guards, customs authorities and intelligence services, government bodies that manage and monitor the security sector and the institutions responsible for guaranteeing the rule of law including the judiciary and penal systems. Additional actors that play an important role in the security sector include: civil society organizations, donors supporting security sector reforms, armed opposition groups and private security firms.

A wide range of initiatives fall under the umbrella of SSR, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes (DDR); the integration of gender into peacekeeping operations; drafting and implementing legislation mandating civilian oversight of the military; training the judiciary on stalking and domestic violence; to quota systems and new recruitment practices to increase female and/or minority representation within the police. There remains many areas of SSR that remain genderblind. Many recent initiatives on security sector reform fail to take into consideration the need to ensure women's participation in decision-making and to mainstream gender issues. In last the two years, only a handful of case studies, reports and articles have dealt directly with the topic.

Source: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch>

Since women and children are some of the most vulnerable groups in society, particularly when there is conflict, parliament should use its oversight responsibility to ensure that these vulnerable groups are protected supported. Unwanted pregnancy, resulting from sexual violence in a conflict situation is a gender issue affecting both boys and girls. In Rwanda, an estimated 20,000 children were born out of sexual violence, several of whom were reported to have been left to the state by their mothers to be adopted out, raised by the state or left to fend for themselves.

### **Gender-Based Violence**

Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration on Violence Against Women defines violence against women as being: *“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts as coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”*

Violence is not only a human rights issue. Although violence is experienced by both men and women and both can be perpetrators of violence, women and girls constitute the majority of victims of violence. Gender-based violence indicates an unequal balance of power between men and women. The perception of men as strong, courageous, aggressive and dominant puts pressure on men to live up to such expectations, sometimes to the detriment of the people

around them. While few of these characteristics are biological, the rest are determined by society.

**Box 18: 2007 World Bank HIV Rates by Gender**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
Algeria	0.1%	0.1%
Angola	0.3%	0.2%
Benin	0.9%	0.3%
Botswana	15.3%	5.1%
Burkina Faso	0.9%	0.5%
Burundi	1.3%	0.4%
Cameroon	4.3%	1.2%
Central African Republic	5.5%	1.1%
Chad	2.8%	2.0%
Comoros	0.1%	0.1%
Congo, Rep.	2.3%	0.8%
Cote d'Ivoire	2.4%	0.8%
Djibouti	2.1%	0.7%
Equatorial Guinea	2.5%	0.8%
Eritrea	0.9%	0.3%
Ethiopia	1.5%	0.5%
Gabon	3.9%	1.3%
The Gambia	0.6%	0.2%
Ghana	1.3%	0.4%
Guinea-Bissau	1.2%	0.4%
Lesotho	14.9%	5.9%
Madagascar	0.1%	0.2%
Malawi	8.4%	2.4%
Mali	1.1%	0.4%
Mauritania	0.5%	0.9%
Mauritius	1.0%	1.8%
Morocco	0.1%	0.1%
Mozambique	8.5%	2.9%
Namibia	10.3	3.4%
Niger	0.5%	0.9%
Nigeria	2.3%	0.8%
Rwanda	1.4%	0.5%
Senegal	0.8%	0.3%
Sierra Leone	1.3%	0.4%
Somalia	0.3%	0.6%
South Africa	12.7%	4.0%
Sudan	1.0%	0.3%
Swaziland	22.6%	5.8%
Tanzania	0.9%	0.5%
Togo	2.4%	0.8%
Tunisia	0.1%	0.1%
Uganda	3.9%	1.3%
Zambia	11.3%	3.6%
Zimbabwe	7.7%	2.9%

### Consequences of Gender-Based Violence

Whether violence is physiological or psychological, it has an effect on the victim's capacity to be productive. Over 50 percent of people living with HIV/AIDS in Africa are women (see Box 18). Conflict situations accelerate the spread of HIV/AIDS, particularly

through the use of sexual violence as a weapon. This form of violence presents a major challenge for organizations responsible for protecting civilians. In Tanzania people are said to spend 60% less time on agricultural activities due to the demand on their time to care for family members and relatives who are sick and suffer from HIV/AIDS. Since women are mostly engaged in agriculture, the inability to produce to one's maximum potential contributes to malnutrition and poverty, particularly in a post-conflict situation.

Traditionally, when a mother is physically unable to cope with the welfare needs of the family, due to gender or domestic violence reasons, it is the girl child who is expected to drop out of school to assume family care giving responsibilities. A withdrawal of the girl child from school is not based on biological differences between boys and girls, but on society's perception of who should perform the domestic welfare duties. Dropping out of school at an early age increases the girl's vulnerability to starting a family at an early age and the potential for a large family. All of these outcomes become a burden to society, compounding and exacerbating the level of poverty.

<b>Box 19: Education Rate Breakdown by Gender</b>		
	<b>2001</b>	<b>2006</b>
Gross Enrollment Rate, primary, female	96	103
Gross Enrollment Rate, primary, male	103	108
Gross Enrollment Rate, secondary, female	58	64
Gross Enrollment Rate, secondary, male	63	67
Gross Enrollment Rate, tertiary, female	20	26
Gross Enrollment Rate, tertiary, male	20	24
Gross Intake Rate to grade 1, female	107	...
Gross Intake Rate to grade 1, male	120	...
<b>Primary Completion Rate, female</b>	80	85
<b>Primary Completion Rate, male</b>	86	88

*Source: World Bank EdStats*

### Protecting Victims of Gender-Based Violence

Gender discrimination is prevalent in very subtle ways. For example, if a woman becomes the victim of a gender-based violence, she typically must first complete a form with the police before she may seek medical attention. But when police are not near or when the police are not properly trained for treating gender violence,

women may not receive the treatment they need or may be required to travel long distances to complete this requirement before obtaining medical treatment. (See document on [Training Resources on Police Reform and Gender](#)). Even when administrative authorities are female, the victims' privacy is not guaranteed.

### Box 20:

#### Facts About Gender and HIV/AIDS

**Higher Infection Rates** The highest "gender gap" in HIV infection rates is recorded between young women and men between 15-24 years old. Within this cohort, for every young person infected, three out of four are young women (UNAIDS, July 2008). Understanding why women and girls are more likely to become infected with HIV therefore falls into the domain of gender relations and gender inequality (See Unit 2).

**Higher Infection Rates** Women and girls make-up a growing proportion of those requiring treatment and care. Past experience shows that there are many social and economic barriers, which increase vulnerability to infection and deny women their rights to medical treatment and health.

**Caretakers** Women and girls are more likely than men and boys to assume the caretaker responsibility for those who are sick and need care. As a result, girls are more likely than boys to be taken out of school to maintain the needs of the household.

**International Spread** Nowhere is the epidemic more "feminized" than in sub-Saharan Africa, where 60% of adults infected are women, and 75% of young people infected are young women and girls.

**Violence and Abuse** Studies across sub-Saharan Africa have confirmed the link between physical and sexual abuse by intimate partners and HIV exposure. For example, a survey of nearly 1400 women attending antenatal clinics in Soweto, South Africa found significantly higher rates of HIV infection among women who were abused. The study also produced evidence that abusive men are more likely than non-abusive men to be HIV-positive.

**Orientation** Traditionally, men who have sex with men (MSM) have been identified as a high-risk group, as HIV emerged among this group in North America and Europe. Because of this association, the MSM community has often been met by stigmatization and hostility. It is important to promote a message that HIV infection does not discriminate based on sexual orientation.

**Always Risky** Conversely, HIV prevention messages that focus too heavily on heterosexual transmission have left many to believe that sex between men is does not pose a risk of HIV infection, which is false. Such belief and inherent risks will continue to persist unless sex between men is acknowledged and addressed. In many parts of the world, particularly Africa, health intervention for men who have sex with men remains rare or poorly developed.

*Source: Operational Guide on HIV/AIDS – A Rights Based Approach, 2005*

One way of enforcing the CEDAW could be the introduction of privacy acts prohibiting the divulging of personal information by police officers or public officials, as well as ensuring the

provision of adequate resources for enforcing the laws. The establishment of a Commission on the Status of Women or a Commission on Gender Equality, which would deal with gender-based violence and appointment of a woman Commissioner can assist in encouraging women to report such abuses. As part of their oversight responsibility, MPs could develop a system to monitor the establishment and effectiveness of the proposed Commission.

### **Role of Parliamentarians**

Gender Mainstreaming into policies, programs and projects is essential for sustainable development. Capacity enhancement is a critical part of gender mainstreaming. It helps to strengthen the awareness among development actors for whom incorporating gender concerns into policies, programs and projects can increase development effectiveness.

Parliamentarians can **minimize the impact of conflict** on vulnerable groups, particularly women, by:

- Analyzing the budget to ensure resources allocated to law enforcement agencies responsible for responding to cases of violence against women
- Gender sensitizing the reporting mechanisms for women subjected to sexual violence
- Thoroughly reviewing the laws and policies designed to ensure privacy of women who report cases of sexual violence
- Investigating child protection mechanisms and policies to determine whether they are robust enough to protect children, especially considering the ongoing threat of boys being abducted against their will and forced to fight as child soldiers
- Exploring legislative and policy options to deal with cases of unwanted children born out of sexual violence
- Analyzing the budget to ensure an appropriate allocation of resources targeted toward ameliorating the impact of violence against women, such as funding women's shelters
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the gender focal points and that of the Commission on the Status of Women or Commission on Gender Equality where such an organization exists

- Initiating or adopting laws that guarantee protection of people living with HIV/AIDS, particularly the most vulnerable of this vulnerable group, namely women and little girls

### Unit 4 Questions

Please answer each of the following questions. If you are taking this course in a group you may then meet to discuss your answers.

1. What gaps do you see within the field of gender and security?
2. What actions or initiatives would you prioritize for future work in gender violence and security? Do you have any concrete recommendations for policy-makers?
3. When women and children have been combatants in situations of combat, what methods have you seen used to help them reintegrate?
4. There is a direct correlation between AIDS among women and conflict. Using a particular example, in what other ways does conflict negatively impact women?
5. How does conflict impact education?
6. In what ways have you seen parliamentarians effectively improve the situation for women and children during or post-conflict.

### Select Bibliography

United Nations Development Fund For Women (UNIFEM). Masculinity and Gender-Based Violence. UNIFEM Gender Fact Sheet No. 5

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). July 2004. *Report on the global AIDS epidemic*. Geneva: UNAIDS

Parliament and HIV Learning Module

### Internet Resources

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

<http://www.dcaf.ch/publications/kms/details.cfm?lng=en&id=100133&nav1=5>

<http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>