

Access to Livelihoods

Livelihoods are comprised of the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources), and activities required to make a living. One speaks of sustainable livelihoods when conditions are supportive of development, whilst safeguarding resources and opportunities for future generations¹.

Women and girls who lack livelihood opportunities are particularly at risk for gender-based violence. Women are forced to stay in abusive relationships; girls are forced to resort to prostitution or survival sex to meet their basic needs; and, young girls are married for the dowries they can bring into the family². The poverty, social instability and powerlessness that characterise conflict may lead to a weakening of social norms that regulate behaviour, including sexual behaviour³. In crisis, the majority of displaced persons have limited or no means to provide for themselves and their families. During conflict, the lack of economic opportunity often results in increases in domestic violence and alcohol abuse, and people are forced to resort to harmful behaviour to survive, such as prostitution and trading sex for food.



UNHCR Picture, www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2006/issue4/0406p51.htm

Violence against Women and Girls in Conflict

The risks are higher for women, who often have had little education or training, and may not have the skills or opportunities to earn an income outside the home, and yet find themselves responsible for the survival and sustenance of their families during extended periods of displacement⁴.

In the aftermath of conflict when countries are beginning to rebuild, there may be new opportunities to strengthen laws, policies and practices in support of building sustainable livelihoods. Supporting gender equality and women's human rights can help facilitate the growth of sustainable livelihoods in post-conflict settings. These opportunities are lost, however, if gender inequalities worsen in the period after conflict.

1. FAO, "Sustainable livelihoods and emergencies", http://www.undp.org/cpr/iasec/content/docs/Working_Docs/FAO_Sustainable_Livelihoods_Emergency_Framework.doc

2. UNFPA State of the World Population report (2008), *Reaching Common Grounds: Culture, Gender and Human Rights*, New York, p. 28. <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/>

3. RAISE Initiative (2007), fact sheet on HIV & sexually transmitted infections, p1, <http://www.raiseinitiative.org/library/#factsheets>

4. SHERRIFF A., BARNES K. (2008), "Enhancing the EU response to women and armed conflict with particular reference to Development Policy", study for the Slovenian Presidency of the EU, p.25, http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/foto/0803/WAC_study_-_final-zenske.pdf



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Violence against women negatively impacts human capital.

- Studies have found that sexual assault victims report more health symptoms and poorer perceptions of their health compared with non-victims⁵;
- Sexual and gender-based violence is a security issue because it is a human rights violation and therefore negatively impacts the ability of women and men to secure and enjoy their basic rights⁶;
- Of the 960 million adults in the world who cannot read, two-thirds are women⁷; and
- 70% of the 130 million children who are out of school are girls⁸;
- At least one in three women globally has been physically or sexually abused at some time in her life⁹.



Lack of livelihood opportunities increases women's vulnerability to sexual violence, exploitation and discrimination.

- Women and girls may be coerced into providing sex to ensure access to basic needs such as water, food and medicine¹⁰;
- In crises settings, women need to travel long distances in search of firewood and other basic supplies, which puts them at greater risk of attack¹¹;
- General unemployment can also increase sexual and gender-based violence, as in Uganda where surveys of Sudanese refugees found high rates of domestic violence due to inadequate employment opportunities for men¹²;
- A lack of economic independence can trap women and girls in potentially dangerous situations where they are vulnerable to sexual violence, exploitation and discrimination¹³; and
- Although women spend about 70% of their unpaid time caring for family members, that contribution to the global economy remains invisible¹⁴.

5. Terri Weaver, Heidi Resnick, Impact of Violence Against Women on Their Physical Health, <http://www.musc.edu/vawprevention/research/healthimpacts.html>

6. SHERRIFF A., BARNES K. (2008), "Enhancing the EU response to women and armed conflict with particular reference to Development Policy", study for the Slovenian Presidency of the EU, p.73, http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/foto/0803/WAC_study_-_final-zenske.pdf

7. UNFPA State of the World Population report (2008), *Reaching Common Grounds: Culture, Gender and Human Rights*, New York, p. 28., <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/>

8. UNFPA State of the World Population report (2008), *Reaching Common Grounds: Culture, Gender and Human Rights*, New York, p. 28., <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/>

9. Heise, L., et al. (1999). Ending violence against Women. Population Reports L (11). Baltimore: Population Information Program, John Hopkins University School of Public Health) <http://www.infoforhealth.org/>

10. RAISE Initiative (2007), fact sheet on Gender Based Violence, <http://www.raiseinitiative.org/library/#factsheets>

11. RAISE Initiative (2007), fact sheet on Gender Based Violence, <http://www.raiseinitiative.org/library/#factsheets>

12. Heise, Le et al (1999) Ending Violence Against Women. Population Reports L (11) Baltimore: Population Information Program, John Hopkins University School of Public Health. <http://www.infoforhealth.org/>

13. SHERRIFF A., BARNES K. (2008), "Enhancing the EU response to women and armed conflict with particular reference to Development Policy", study for the Slovenian Presidency of the EU, p.25, http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/foto/0803/WAC_study_-_final-zenske.pdf

14. UNFPA State of the World Population report (2008), *Reaching Common Grounds: Culture, Gender and Human Rights*, New York, p. 28., <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/>

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Social capital can prevent violence against women.

- The poverty, social instability and powerlessness that characterize emergencies, as well as the violence endemic to control settings, may lead to a weakening of social norms that regulate behaviour, including sexual behaviour¹⁵; and
- Research has shown that refugees who have been educated, developed useful skills, and acquired resources that they can bring back, may do better upon return than those who have lived for years in camps dependent upon humanitarian assistance¹⁶.

Recommendations

In order to fully implement the EU commitments, we urge the EU to:

- Implement livelihood programs that fully integrate the fact that women may already be unduly burdened with household and childcare responsibilities. Programmes may need to consider employing care providers or providing care facilities, flexible hours, codes of conduct to prevent sexual abuse, and access to sanitation facilities and female staff, etc. Responses should not adversely affect access to other opportunities, such as other employment or education, or divert household resources from productive activities already in place¹⁷;
- Ensure that programmes adopt a holistic approach to supporting sustainable livelihoods that addresses social, emotional and economic well-being. Without opportunities to make use of or further develop their skills during displacement, women and youth will not be able to fully participate in rebuilding their communities and lives upon return home¹⁸;
- Ensure that programs equip women with transferable skill sets that include life-skills (conflict resolution, communication, health, etc.) and business skills (book-keeping, budgeting, customer service, etc.) so they can sustain livelihoods in the future;
- Promote practical, realistic economic opportunities for women that take into account local conditions and constraints and promote non-traditional jobs for women;
- Develop national action plans to address sexual and gender-based violence that identify comprehensive programs and opportunities for action across sectors, including sexual and reproductive health and the prevention, treatment and care for HIV/AIDS, education and life skills, human rights, justice, security sector reform, and also create necessary socioeconomic recovery and livelihood support programs¹⁹;
- Mainstream gender programming. Women are more likely to suffer the economic consequences of conflict than men. There is a necessity to ensure gender sensitivity mainstreaming within post-conflict reconstruction and economic development is prominent in all planning and implementation²⁰. Empowering women to be financially independent and providing viable options for income-generation can increase their overall personal security, their participation in society, political life and family care; and
- Increase women's access to financial services like microfinance institutions, cooperatives, and savings and loan associations, so they have sufficient capital for entrepreneurial pursuits and have mechanisms for saving money they have earned.

15. FAO, "Sustainable livelihoods and emergencies", http://www.undp.org/cpr/iasc/content/docs/Working_Docs/FAO_Sustainable_Livelihoods_Emergency_Framework.doc

16. Women's commission for refugee women & children, "Livelihoods: Promoting Economic Opportunities for Refugee Women and Youth." <http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/2pagerLivelihoods.pdf>

17. Recommendations from the "The Brussels Call to Action to Address Sexual Violence in Conflict and Beyond", <http://www.unfpa.org/emergencies/symposium06/docs/brusselscalltoactionfinal.doc>

18. SHERRIFF A., BARNES K. (2008), "Enhancing the EU response to women and armed conflict with particular reference to Development Policy", study for the Slovenian Presidency of the EU, p.66, http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/foto/0803/WAC_study_-_final-zenske.pdf

19. UNFPA State of the World report (2008), *Reaching Common Grounds: Culture, Gender and Human Rights*, New York, p. 28.

20. Available on http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0100en01.pdf

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The Brussels Working Group on Violence against Women in Conflict

The Brussels Ad hoc Working Group includes:

CARE International, Cordaid, International Rescue Committee, Justitia et Pax, Marie Stopes International, Médecins Sans Frontières Belgium, Pax Christi International, EurAc Network, Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme, World Organization Against Torture—OMCT and PLAN International.

The observers to this group are:

The Brussels Offices of UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFEM; Human Rights Watch and ISIS Europe.



What is being done by the EU to combat violence against women and girls?

In order for livelihoods to be sustainable, social and political conditions should ideally be supportive of development to safeguard resources and economic opportunities for future generations²¹. At all levels, from international to local, civil society and governments are fighting in order to combat violence against women and girls. We would like to highlight what is being done at the EU Policy level:

- The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership – A joint Africa-EU Strategy agreed at the Lisbon EU-Africa Summit (2007), making general commitments to gender equality and women's rights as well as gender mainstreaming. It particularly has taken the commitment "to promote women in decision-making positions and peace processes, and fight sexual and gender based violence against women²²";
- The EC has adopted in 2006 'The Brussels Call to Action to Address Sexual Violence in Conflict and Beyond' (EC, together with Belgium government and UNFPA), prioritizing the issue of sexual violence against women and girls in all humanitarian, peace building and development frameworks and programming in countries affected by conflict. These efforts should not only address sexual violence but all forms of gender-based violence that endangers civilians in conflict as in peace time;
- The Beijing Platform for Action insists on the fact that similarities and differences between women and men should be recognized and equally valued, and that women and men should enjoy equal status, recognition and consideration. Beijing + 5 outlined the importance of mainstreaming gender in all areas and levels of action. Moreover, it emphasised the importance of the complementary between mainstreaming gender and developing special activities targeting women²³; and
- Commission Communication on gender equality and women empowerment in development is highlighting that gender equality is essential for growth and poverty reduction²⁴.

21. FAO, "Sustainable livelihoods and emergencies", http://www.undp.org/cpr/iasec/content/docs/Working_Docs/FAO_Sustainable_Livelihoods_Emergency_Framework.doc

22. SHERRIFF A., BARNES K. (2008), "Enhancing the EU response to women and armed conflict with particular reference to Development Policy", study for the Slovenian Presidency of the EU, p.66, http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/foto/0803/WAC_study_-_final-zenske.pdf

23. UNFPA State of the World Population report (2008), *Reaching Common Grounds: Culture, Gender and Human Rights*, New York, p. 28., <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/>

24. Available on http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0100en01.pdf

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