

# **FMO Thematic Guide: Gender and Forced Migration**

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## **1. Introduction**

Forced migration commonly “refers to the movements of refugees and internally displaced people” (IDPs). It is different from ‘voluntary’ migration because in the former there is no prior desire or motivation to leave (International Association for the Study of Forced Migration – IASFM). The main causes of involuntary displacement are wars and armed conflicts, although natural disasters and development projects are also to blame. There are other types of forced migration as well, but these are not rigid categories since sometimes causes overlap. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are some 50 million uprooted people around the world, including both refugees and IDPs. Around 75-80 per cent of them are women and children; women and girls account for an estimated 50 per cent of any displaced population.

The effects of forced migration vary in different political, socio-economic, and cultural contexts, and according to factors such as gender, class, age, race, or ethnicity. Since the 1980s, there has been growing recognition that women have been disadvantaged in processes of forced migration. For instance, although women and children are the majority of the displaced in conflict situations, their needs and strengths were not taken into account in the planning and implementation of humanitarian assistance. This situation has changed, up to a certain extent, and many organizations and NGOs now include special programmes for displaced women and girls. As the focus has gradually expanded from ‘women’s’ to gender issues, refugees and IDPs are beginning to be seen as individuals whose specific needs and strengths should be taken into account before, during, and after displacement. However, many issues remain to be tackled. Women and girls still need special attention, together with other vulnerable groups. Recognition of gender-based persecution and the rights of women asylum seekers need to be strengthened, while protection and assistance of IDPs in general need to be improved. More attention should also be directed at development- and disaster-induced development, and their impacts on gender roles and relations.

### **Websites:**

IASFM

<http://www.iasfm.org>

UNHCR

<http://www.unhcr.org>

## **2. Background**

### **2.1 Gender and forced migration in academia**

The emergence of a focus on gender issues within forced migration has been the result of both developments at the academic level and in international human rights and humanitarian assistance. Within academia, the evolution of gender and forced migration (GAFM) as a field of study is linked to feminist theory and, more specifically, to its application to the subject of gender and development (GAD).

The focus on women in development (WID) started in the 1970s as an attempt to bring women more into the centre of development studies and practice. A similar approach informed the emergence of women in forced migration (WIFM)

orientations in the mid-1980s. These initiatives were boosted by major international events, such as the 1985 Decade for Women conference in Nairobi and the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing. As a result of these and other developments, WIFM approaches began to be integrated in the discourse, charters, and programming of organizations working in the field. However, there is still a large gap between rhetoric and implementation, as practitioners continue to ignore the specific needs and strengths of women or resist change.

At the same time, academic studies began to shift from the WID approach towards a GAD orientation, and gender issues also became the focus in forced migration. The concept of gender “refers to the social construction of femininity and masculinity as culturally and historically specific” and is usually used to highlight inequalities in power relations between men and women “worked out by means of prescribed gender roles and... a more implicit power structure of gender symbolism” (Lammers, 1999).

Although a fully gendered approach to forced migration (or indeed development) is still evolving, developments in GAFM have already broadened the way we look at and deal with displaced people. For instance, the emphasis is shifting away from seeing women as a vulnerable group, usually grouped together with children, to the recognition that the impacts of displacement on women are complex and multi-faceted. There is also greater awareness that ‘women’ are not a homogenous group, that the effects of forced migration on women vary in different contexts and according to factors such as class, race, ethnicity, or religion. This applies to men as well, whose roles and identities also need to be taken into account if gender inequalities are to be addressed.

**Website:**

*Forced Migration Review*, 9 (Gender and Displacement)

J. El-Bushra, “Gender and forced migration: editorial”. Oxford: Refugee Studies Centre

<http://www.fmreview.org>

**2.2 Humanitarian assistance and women’s human rights**

Many international organizations, NGOs and aid groups have now moved from the earlier approach of ‘add woman and stir’ towards adopting a gender perspective on forced migration. Key in this have been developments in humanitarian and refugee law, and human rights law, as well as major events such as the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and the 1995 Beijing conference.

Throughout the 1990s, advocates for women’s rights raised the profile of violence against women as a human rights concern, and questioned gender bias and abuse of women in humanitarian action. This led to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the appointment by the United Nations (UN) of a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women. It also resulted in many organizations issuing policy statements and introducing changes in their programmes to integrate gender issues throughout their work.

A major development has been the move towards seeing the rape and sexual abuse of women and girls during wars and armed conflict as a deliberate strategy and a crime to be punished, as reflected in the statutes for the War Crimes Tribunals for

Rwanda and the Former Republic of Yugoslavia. The UNHCR, the main body in charge of assisting displaced people, has also made major steps in adopting a gender strategy since it first began to consider the needs of women and girls in the late 1980s, through the adoption of guidelines for the protection of refugee women and on sexual violence against women. These guidelines have been adopted or taken into account by other organizations as well. For example, the issue of gender-based violence has been addressed by bodies such as the World Health Organization and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Despite all of this, organizational changes are still mostly at the superficial level, while the implementation of a gender approach in the field remains very patchy. Gender guidelines and policies are often unknown or ignored by staff working with refugees, or clash with operational realities. Some organizations, on the other hand, prefer to keep the focus on improving women's human rights and status, rather than gender issues in general, while others take both approaches. There is also a debate going on about the usefulness of gender mainstreaming (i.e. integrating gender issues throughout an organization and all its programmes) versus adopting a specific gender focal point or unit within organizations.

**Websites:**

UN

UN Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, China – September 1995)

<http://www.undp.org/fwcw/daw1.htm>

Beijing +5. Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. 23<sup>rd</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly (5/9 June 2000).

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/Beijing+5.htm>

CEDAW

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

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

<http://www.unhchr.ch/women/>

UNHCR

<http://www.unhcr.org>

World Conference on Human Rights (14-25 June 1993, Vienna, Austria)

<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu5/wchr.htm>

Human Rights Watch

World Report 2002: Women's Human Rights

<http://www.hrw.org/wr2k2/women.html>

Humanitarianism and War Project's NGO Policy Dialogue Series

Dialogue VII: Gender and Humanitarian Action (2 May 2000)

<http://hwproject.tufts.edu/rew/pdf/Report07.pdf>

### **3. Conflict-induced displacement**

#### **3.1 Gender impact of armed conflict**

Women and men experience conflict, displacement, and post-conflict settings differently because of the culturally determined gender division of roles and responsibilities. Civilians – mostly women, children, the elderly, and the disabled – are now the main victims of wars, with estimates that they account for 30-90 per cent of casualties (Muggah, 2001). Women are especially vulnerable in those informal, low-key armed conflicts that are a majority today. Some 80 per cent of casualties by small arms, which are the main weapons used in armed conflicts, are women and children, with the rest being military casualties. Most of the military casualties are young men, although there are a large number of female combatants throughout the world. Men account for 96 per cent of the detainee population and 90 per cent of the missing (International Committee of the Red Cross - ICRC - 2001), while women and children represent a majority of the displaced.

As well as being affected as civilians, women and girls are targeted because of their gender. Armed conflict usually exacerbates inequalities, including gender-based ones, although the effects vary depending on particular contexts. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable because of their disadvantaged position in society in general: they are the majority of the poor, have less access to education and employment opportunities, and are less mobile because of their traditional productive and reproductive roles. This can lead to higher mortality and morbidity among females during armed conflict, as women and girls are affected by physical and sexual violence, impoverishment, lack of access to basic goods and services, and gender discrimination.

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

There are many examples throughout history of the widespread physical, psychological and sexual torturing and injuring of women and girls during armed conflicts. Most of these acts were ignored or condoned, treated as ‘inevitable’ and part of the general climate of violence and exploitation of females. This began to change in the 1990s, as the focus on women’s human rights and humanitarian assistance drew increasing attention to the problem of ‘gender-based violence’ (GBV).

GBV “is an umbrella term for any harm that is perpetrated against a person’s will; that has a negative impact on the physical or psychological health, development, and identity of the person; and that is the result of gendered power inequities that exploit distinctions between males and females, among males, and among females. Although not exclusive to women and girls, GBV principally affects them across all cultures. Violence may be physical, sexual, psychological, economic, or sociocultural” (Ward, Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children - CRWC - 2002).

Common acts of GBV committed against women and girls during armed conflict and consequent social disruption include sexual assault, often associated with violent physical assault; mass, multiple, and gang rapes; early or forced marriage and forced pregnancies; enforced sterilization; forced or coerced prostitution;

military sexual slavery; human trafficking; and domestic violence. Men and boys also suffer from sexual abuse and rape, and are usually the main targets of forced conscription. Other acts of GBV that may increase during conflict and particularly affect women and girls are female infanticide, female genital mutilation, and honour killing.

GBV can be random or systematic. For instance, the sexual assault and rape of women and girls can become a strategy of war used to frighten or destroy communities or entire populations, symbolise victory over the enemy, or supply fighters with sexual services. There is also evidence of female combatants being subjected to sexual exploitation. Rape, forced pregnancy and sexual torture are now recognized as war crimes and crimes against humanity. In Bosnia, more than 20,000 Muslim women were raped in a single year during the conflict, while a majority of female survivors of the genocide in Rwanda were sexually assaulted (UNHCR, 2002). In February 2001, the UN War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague convicted two former Bosnian Serb soldiers of “sexually enslaving Muslim women and girls”; in 1999, it issued its first indictment for rape, against a Rwandan soldier (Saving Women’s Lives - SWL - 2002).

**Websites:**

World Health Organization:

Understanding Gender-based and Sexual Violence

[http://www.who.int/reproductive\\_health/publications/RHR\\_00\\_13\\_RH\\_conflict\\_and\\_displacement/PDF\\_RHR\\_00\\_13/Chapter17.en.pdf](http://www.who.int/reproductive_health/publications/RHR_00_13_RH_conflict_and_displacement/PDF_RHR_00_13/Chapter17.en.pdf)

Violence against women in situations of armed conflict

[http://www.who.int/frh\\_whd/VAW/infopack/English/PDF/v7.pdf](http://www.who.int/frh_whd/VAW/infopack/English/PDF/v7.pdf)

WCRWC (30 April 2002)

If Not Now, When? Addressing Gender-based Violence in Refugee, Internally Displaced, and Post-conflict Settings. A Global Overview

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/s/40B847015485B34749256BFE0006E603>

InterAction

“Report of the InterAction Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of Displaced Children” (June 2002)

[http://www.interaction.org/...i/562\\_report\\_ia\\_task\\_force.pdf](http://www.interaction.org/...i/562_report_ia_task_force.pdf)

*GBV in Sierra Leone*

After almost a decade of civil war, Sierra Leone has been seriously devastated. Tens of thousands of people have been killed, and there are more than 400,000 refugees and up to 1 million displaced people. The effects of the armed conflict have been particularly severe in rural areas. Rebels of the Revolutionary United Front have raped, murdered, and mutilated thousands of civilians; they have also abducted women and children to be used as sexual slaves and child soldiers.

Even before the armed conflict erupted, women and girls across the country, and especially those living in rural areas, had limited socio-economic opportunities. During the war, women and girls experienced gender-specific abuses, such as individual and gang rapes, abductions, sexual slavery and forced marriages. Many of them lost relatives, suffered or witnessed atrocities, and some were forced to

take part in the violence. Tens of thousands were forced to flee their homes and moved to urban areas or to refugee camps in Guinea, where they lived without adequate assistance or protection. Many women and girls suffered from further physical and sexual abuse during displacement, often having to resort to prostitution or the exchange of sexual favours to obtain basic items and services for their survival and that of their families. They now face a return to a country destroyed by war, with little family or community support, where violence against women and girls is still high and their rights are not guaranteed.

**Websites:**

U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR):

USCR Special Report: Sierra Leone

<http://www.refugees.org/news/crisis/sierraleone/sierraleone.htm>

Notes From the Field: Sierra Leonean Refugee Women and the Challenge of Reintegration (19 July 2002)

[http://www.refugees.org/world/themes/women\\_children.htm](http://www.refugees.org/world/themes/women_children.htm)

Conciliation Resources:

Gender and Conflict in Sierra Leone

Rural Women and Girls in Sierra Leone

<http://www.c-r.org/menu.htm>

Human Rights Watch

World Report 2000: Women in Conflict and Refugees

<http://www.hrw.org/wr2k/>

**3.1.2 Other types of impact**

The effects of armed conflict on women and girls go beyond sexual and other types of GBV. Women experience distinct economic and social problems as they find it extremely difficult to care and support themselves and their families financially. As men join the armed struggle, are killed or kidnapped, many women have to assume the role of breadwinner, something that they may not be used to or prepared for, and for which they often have little support. This leads to greater vulnerability to hunger, malnutrition, and exploitation. Often, during conflict and displacement, women and girls are forced to offer sex for survival, in exchange for basic goods or protection. Young girls and women alone, especially lone female heads of household, are at greater risk. In addition, the disruption of basic services during conflict means inadequate access to essential services such as healthcare, including reproductive health services. This is happening at a time when women and girls are at a greater risk of getting pregnant and contracting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS.

However, the impacts of armed conflict on women are not always negative. For some women, it allows for greater mobility and the opportunity to learn new skills and assume new roles, which may be an empowering experience. This, on the other hand, can lead to increased tensions in gender relations, especially when men find it difficult to cope with their reduced ability to act as the main leader, provider, and protector in the family. The increased incidence of domestic violence during and after conflict, for instance, is a result of the stresses and traumas imposed on families and traditional gender relations. Also, generally, many of the advantages

gained by women during armed conflict are lost during peacetime. For instance, women hardly participate in peace negotiations, and therefore the needs of women and girls are not always taken into account in peace accords. There are some exceptions, however. After peace was achieved in Guatemala, refugee women in Mexico became directly involved in repatriation negotiations and made sure that their equal rights to private and communal property were enshrined.

**Websites:**

Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Gender and Peacekeeping Online Training Course

J. Gardam and H. Charlesworth "Protection of Women in Armed Conflict", *Human Rights Quarterly*, 19(2): 283-333.

[http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/genderandpeacekeeping/resources/5\\_Protection\\_of\\_Women\\_in\\_Armed\\_Conflict.pdf](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/genderandpeacekeeping/resources/5_Protection_of_Women_in_Armed_Conflict.pdf)

**ICRC**

Women Facing War (Geneva 2001)

<http://www.icrc.org>

Refugee Studies Centre (Oxford) – Forced Migration Online

J. El-Bushra, ACORD, "Thematic Paper 3: Gender Planning in Conflict Situations" (1995).

<http://www.forcedmigration.org>

**UNHCR**

*Refugees Magazine* Issue 126 Women – Seeking a Better Deal. "Fighting for Equal Rights..." (April, 2002)

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/print?tbl=MEDIA&id=3cb6ae294>

**UN**

"Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict: United Nations Response"

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/cover.htm>

**UNICEF**

Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: "War hits home when it hits women and girls"

<http://www.unicef.org/graca/women.htm>

International Peace Research Institute (Oslo)

I. Skjelsbaek "Gendered Battlefields. A Gender Analysis of Peace and Conflict" (PRIO Report 6, 1997)

<http://www.prio.no/publications/reports/battlefields/battlefields.html>

**3.2 Women refugees**

Forced migration is one of the most visible consequences of armed conflict.

Despite the fact that women and children account for a majority of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), up until relatively recently their needs and strengths were not taken into account. The gender-based discrimination that affects women and girls in most societies before and during conflict is usually replicated or even exacerbated during forced migration. Although since the 1990s there have



been major efforts to improve protection and assistance for displaced females, most female refugees and IDPs still face violence and discrimination.

### **3.2.1 Women seeking asylum**

Women fleeing to other countries often find it difficult to obtain refugee status on their own, instead of as dependents. The 1951 Refugee Convention (Geneva Convention), on which most states' asylum laws are based, considers refugees "persons outside their country of nationality who have a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion" (Mertus, 2000). Gender-based violence is not explicitly included as a form of persecution, although recently human rights advocates have made some progress in forcing states to recognize gender-based persecution as grounds for claiming asylum and to eliminate discrimination against women refugees. Canada was the first country to adopt such an approach in 1993, making no distinction between public (domestic) and private violence against women. Since then, other countries, like the United States, have followed suit, but the practical results of such advancements still need to be studied.

#### **Websites:**

Canadian Council for Refugees  
<http://www.web.net/~ccr/gendpers.html>

UNHCR  
<http://www.unhcr.org>

### **3.2.2 Life in refugee camps**

Gender inequities affect women and girls when they flee to refugee camps in neighbouring countries, as well as IDPs. Before the 1990s, there was little awareness of the different needs and strengths of refugee women and men. In many camps, food and other basic goods were distributed to male heads of household, leaving women and girls, and especially female heads of household, disadvantaged. Protection and specific assistance for displaced women and girls was mostly non-existent. Nowhere was this more evident than in the case of the 'lost boys of Sudan'.

In the late 1980s, thousands of boys and girls fled their homes in Sudan because of armed fighting. They wandered around East Africa for years, with many dying on the way and the rest surviving as best as they could until in the early 1990s they eventually reached the Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya. The ordeal of the so-called lost boys of Sudan received quite a lot of media attention. After several more years languishing in the camp, 4,000 of the boys whose parents had either died or were missing were offered resettlement in the United States. By contrast, no one highlighted the plight of the 'lost girls'. Among those who made it to Kenya there were several thousands girls aged 8-10. Most of them were absorbed by foster families in the camp, with many becoming little more than unpaid servants. No one offered them resettlement. In the refugee camp, the girls suffered from rape, early pregnancies, kidnapping, and forced marriage.

This situation started to change with the raising of the profile of gender issues in forced migration, and development in general, in the 1990s. Today, there is a

growing recognition that women and children need specific attention. Life in refugee camps is hard both for women and men, as well as the young and old. The camps are often designed and run without any input from refugees themselves and therefore do not always reflect their needs and desires.

#### *Protection Issues*

There is plenty of evidence that women and girls are often subjected to sexual and other types of GBV in refugee camps, sometimes by security personnel, camp officials, or aid workers. Young, unaccompanied females are among the most vulnerable, as well as women from minority ethnic groups. In Somalia, for instance, rape and sexual abuse in IDP camps is common, with women and children, especially Bantus and Ogadenis, most at risk. Somali women and girls living in refugee camps in Kenya have also been the target of rape and sexual attack by other Somalis, Kenyan police and soldiers. In Guinea, after a speech against refugees by the president in September 2000, thousands of Sierra Leonean and Liberian women and girl refugees were physically and sexually attacked by police, soldiers and civilians.

#### *Access to basic goods*

The distribution of food and other basic goods to refugee populations was traditionally organized through male leaders and sometimes did not reach women and girls. More recently, however, there has been greater awareness that the best way of assuring the nutritional and basic needs of families is to distribute aid through women. This often leads to a more efficient and equitable use of resources. Shelter is also often a problem for women and girls in the cramped conditions in refugee camps. In the Shalman camp for Afghans in Pakistan there were, in March 2002, some 20,000 refugees sharing 3,576 tents, 865 latrines, 373 washrooms and 5 doctors (SWL 2002).

In some instances, the design of camps adds to women's and girls' discomforts and insecurities. For instance, communal housing offers no privacy for women, while lone women and girls housed in marked tents may become easy targets of sexual abuse. The fact that women and girls in many African societies are responsible for fetching water and fuel, usually at distance from their tents or even outside the camps, has sometimes left them exposed to sexual and physical attacks. For example, a study of Somali refugee women in 1999 suggested that the women were cooking fewer meals because of the fear of being raped while collecting firewood (SWL 2002). In some refugee-type situations, attempts have been made to involve women in the designing of the layout and facilities of the camps with good results.

#### *Healthcare needs*

Most displaced women have little or no access to proper healthcare. The lack of healthcare facilities affects refugee populations in general, given the basic conditions and resources in refugee camps. However, women and girls are at a greater disadvantage because their reproductive healthcare needs increase during emergencies, given their roles and vulnerability to GBV.

Basic reproductive healthcare needs include personal hygiene, safe birthing conditions, pre- and post-natal care, family planning and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Some organizations, such as the UNHCR, UNFPA,

the WHO, and the Red Cross, provide basic healthcare, including mental and reproductive healthcare, for women in emergency situations. However, according to a survey of 81 NGOs working with refugees and IDPs, only eight had specific policies or guidelines on providing reproductive health services, while only 38 supplied some of those services (mostly family planning and treatment of STDs) (SWL 2002).

#### *Education and employment*

Education, training, and income-generation opportunities for women in refugee camps are also limited. Access to education in such conditions is generally limited, with women and girls often left out owing to traditional practices and gender discrimination. In the Shalman refugee camp for Afghans in Pakistan there were, in March 2002, four new primary schools for boys and one for girls. The literacy rate in Afghanistan is estimated to be around 33 per cent for men and 13 per cent for women (SWL 2002).

Finding employment or any other means of income generation is often harder for women. Lone females, women heads of household, and women with young children or other relatives to look after are particularly disadvantaged, since they have to support themselves and their families in very difficult circumstances. When they find paid work, in or outside the camp, it is often menial, insecure, and badly remunerated. Women have to deal not only with the lack of employment opportunities open to refugees in general, both inside and outside camps, but also with restrictions placed on them by male relatives according to traditional gender roles. Also, because of their gender roles and identities, women are often less prepared for paid work, lacking the necessary skills and knowledge. As a result, some resort to prostitution, begging, or the exchange of sexual favours for goods and services. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to illegal trafficking for the sex industry worldwide.

Although some progress has been made in the assistance and protection of female refugees, still more needs to be done. Despite the growing focus on gender issues in forced migration and attempts at gender mainstreaming by organizations involved with refugees, implementation of policies and guidelines is not always up to scratch. In addition, some of the changes made in programmes or new policies implemented have been largely superficial if not fully counterproductive, mainly due to the lack of detailed gender analyses of specific situations. Advocates for refugees and women's human rights are calling for greater involvement of women, and refugees in general, in the planning, organization, and running of refugee camps.

#### **Websites:**

UNHCR:

*Refugees Magazine* Issue 126 (April 2002)

Refugee Women and a Gender Perspective Approach, Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, Standing Committee 16<sup>th</sup> meeting (3 September 1999)

<http://www.unhcr.org>

UN

Gender-based persecution. Report of the Expert Group Meeting, Toronto, Canada, 9-12 November 1997

[Gopher://gopher.un.org/00/enc/cn6/1998/armedcon/GBP97.EN](http://gopher.un.org/00/enc/cn6/1998/armedcon/GBP97.EN)

Human Rights Watch

World Report 2001: Women in Conflict and Refugees

<http://www.hwr.org/wr2k1/women/women3.html>

USCR

Refugee Women: The Forgotten Majority

[http://www.refugees.org/world/articles/women\\_refugees.htm](http://www.refugees.org/world/articles/women_refugees.htm)

The Global IDP Project

<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wCountries/Somalia>

*Forced Migration Review*, 9 (Gender and Displacement)

S. Gururaja "Gender dimensions of displacement".

<http://www.fmreview.org>

Amnesty International

In Search of Safety: the Forcibly Displaced and Human Rights in Africa (1997)

<http://www.web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/index/AFR0110051997>

### **3.3 Internally displaced women**

Of the estimated 20-25 million people internally displaced by conflicts around the world, more than 70 per cent are women and children (Cohen, 1998). The plight of internally displaced people (IDPs) is usually worse than that of refugees for two main reasons. First, IDPs remain within the borders of their own country, and therefore under the jurisdiction and protection of the same government that may have been responsible for their displacement or at least unable to protect them in the first place. Also, in situations of widespread conflict IDPs cannot escape the dangers and fears particular to settings of war and political violence. Secondly, IDPs are afforded less international protection and assistance than refugees who cross borders. Although a representative of the UN Secretary-General on Internally Displaced People was appointed in 1992 and Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were introduced in 1998, these are not legally binding.

#### **3.3.1 Protection and assistance**

The internally displaced, both women and men, are thus more vulnerable to continued violence and human rights abuses, with no legal or institutional form of redress. Protection in these cases is a major problem, especially for women and girls. Despite attempts by some international organisations and NGOs to provide humanitarian assistance, IDPs have less access to services than refugees. For instance, while Burundi women living in refugee camps in Tanzania received health care, food rations, and education for children, those women in displacement camps inside Burundi lacked all those services and were more vulnerable to sexual violence or the exchange of sexual favours for food or protection (Benjamin, 1998). In places where many of the internally displaced left their homes as individuals or

in small groups, rather than en masse, and where armed conflict continues, as is the case in Colombia, protection and assistance are even more scarce.

### **3.3.2 General impacts on women**

Internally displaced women and girls, like those in refugee situations, are affected differently than men by displacement. They are more vulnerable to sexual and other types of GBV, suffer the break-up of their families and community networks, and the loss of social and cultural ties. Most internally displaced women are from rural areas and ill-prepared for the changes in gender roles and responsibilities that come with displacement, whether this involves life in an IDP camp or moving to an urban environment. In many cases, they become heads of households, and have to cope not only with their personal traumas and problems, but also with having to support their families economically and emotionally.

Poor access to basic services, such as shelter and food, and lack of employment and training opportunities force many internally displaced women and girls into prostitution. This, in turn, increases the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases or unwanted pregnancies in a context of limited health care. In addition, sometimes the disruptions in family and social life leave women more vulnerable to sexual abuse and violence, including domestic violence. Some of these problems can only be solved, or alleviated, through increased international protection of IDPs and greater involvement of internally displaced women and men in actions aimed at helping them.

#### **Websites:**

Norwegian Refugee Council (Global IDP Survey)

R. Cohen (1998) "Protecting Internally Displaced Women and Children" in W. Davies (ed) *Rights Have No Borders. Internal Displacement Worldwide*.

[http://www.nrc.no/global\\_idp\\_survey/rights\\_have\\_no\\_borders/cohen.htm](http://www.nrc.no/global_idp_survey/rights_have_no_borders/cohen.htm)

UNICEF

J.A. Benjamin and F. Khadija (1988) "The Gender Dimensions of Internal Displacement: Concept Paper and Annotated Bibliography", submitted to the Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

<http://www.unicef.org/emerg/IDPgen.pdf>

UN

OCHA Publications: Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

[http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha\\_ol\\_pub/idp\\_gp/idp.html](http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol_pub/idp_gp/idp.html)

### **3.3.3 Case study: Colombia**

A recent study by a local human rights organization (Codhes) estimates that there are 2,700,000 IDPs in Colombia (Semana, 2002). This is in addition to the many Colombians who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, as well as in the US, Canada, and Europe. Both IDPs and refugees are the result of more than four decades of armed conflict between the state, left-wing guerrillas and right-wing paramilitaries, all with links to the drugs trade. During the past decade alone, some 30,000 people were killed as a result of political violence (FMO Country Guide: Colombia, 2002), while another 200,000 are estimated to have been the victims of

criminal violence (Muggah and Berman, 2001). Most of those killed or forced to flee by the armed conflict are civilians.

### *Gender impact of conflict*

As in many other places, the impact of conflict and displacement in Colombia has been different for men and women. Although young adult men have typically accounted for most of the dead, women are also increasingly becoming targets; local reports estimate that more than 360 women are killed each year as a result of political violence (Leonard, 2002). Women and girls are killed in massacres, sometimes of entire families, or because of their growing participation in armed groups. They are also targeted because of their activism, profession, or their belonging to a certain group - IDPs, prostitutes, street children, and indigenous and Afro-Caribbean women are particularly vulnerable. In addition, women account for an estimated 49-58 per cent of the total displaced population, and up to 80 per cent of the displaced living in urban areas (Global IDP Project, 2002). Women and children together represent 74-80 per cent of the displaced population.

Typically, women flee rural regions after the killing or kidnapping of their husbands, fathers, or sons by paramilitaries or guerrillas, or under the threat of death and violence. Traumatized and terrorized, they abandon their homes, leaving everything behind. They often move with children and other relatives under their care to an urban destination where if they are lucky they will have some help from friends or relatives. Around 30-50 per cent of IDPs in Colombia live in or around large cities, with the rest settling in smaller cities or in rural areas (Leonard, 2002). In addition, most people flee as individuals or in small groups, rather than en masse, which makes assistance and protection once they get to a destination more difficult. Although there are national laws and programmes to assist IDPs, implementation is poor and access to basic services is usually limited by lack of resources and discrimination. Women in particular get little official help; many of them lack identity documents or proof of displacement, or are unwilling to register as IDPs because of fear of being persecuted and/or stigmatized. Black and Indian women are at even greater disadvantage, as they are discriminated against not only along gender but also along ethnic and identity lines.

### *GBV*

Displaced women heads of households are one of the most vulnerable groups. According to government figures for 1999, 56 per cent of displaced families were headed by women – 74 per cent of them by widows or women abandoned during the process of displacement (Global IDP Project, 2002). Female heads of households and women and girls on their own are more vulnerable to gender-based violence (GBV) as they try to provide for themselves and their families since they lack any protection or support. Rape and sexual violence is systematically used against women and girls in Colombia as part of the armed conflict and in the context of displacement. It is often used by armed groups as a strategy of intimidation. In a recent survey by Profamilia (Global IDP Project, 2001), one out of five displaced women said they had been sexually abused, although the total is likely to be higher since many instances of rape and abuse go unreported. In addition, 60 per cent of displaced women had no access to healthcare services. This is particularly worrying, since the social disruption caused by armed conflict and displacement usually causes a large rise in sexually transmitted diseases,

increased pregnancies among adolescent girls, and enormous emotional traumas and stresses. A UN HCHR report on the human rights situation in Colombia (2002) mentioned the lack of psycho-social care for displaced women who had been sexually abused (Global IDP Project, 2002).

### *Struggle to survive*

Despite all of this, the main priority concern for many displaced women in Colombia is the lack of options for income generation. Rural women used to an environment of well-delineated gender roles find it very difficult to cope with urban life. Families must have access to instant cash to pay for basics such as food and shelter, or to send their children to school and obtain healthcare. Many of these women are not used to negotiating their way around bureaucracies and officials and therefore find it difficult to get any assistance. Finding paid work is also hard, since they may not have the right skills, or in the case of women with young children, because of lack of childcare. If they find work, is usually in low-paid activities such as domestic service or street vending. There is growing evidence of IDP women and girls turning to begging or prostitution as a means of survival. NGOs have also reported an increase in trafficking in women, with Colombia currently rated as the third largest source of trafficked women.

There is evidence that traditional peasant women suffer even more than men from loss of their identity. Men, on the other hand, suffer more the impact of displacement through unemployment. The psycho-social consequences of displacement, with the changes in traditional roles, put an enormous pressure on families. This is one of the main reasons for the increase in domestic violence, affecting mainly women and children. Adolescent boys in particular are also affected by their greater exposure to violence and criminality. The experience of displacement, together with lack of education and economic opportunities, often make them turn to criminality or to join armed groups. There is also evidence of girls becoming friendly with or joining guerrillas or paramilitaries for protection or as a means of survival.

### **Websites:**

UNHCR

<http://www.unhcr.org>

Semana (Colombian magazine)

J. Rojas R. (2002) "Una Sociedad en Medio del Colapso" (10 September 2002).

<http://www.semana.com>

The Global IDP Project, Norwegian Refugee Council-UN, Geneva

<http://www.idpproject.org>

Consultoría Para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (Codhes)

<http://www.codhes.org.co>

WCRWC:

M. Leonard (2002) "Internally Displaced in Colombia. A Desk Study Overview" in *If Not Now, When? Addressing Gender-based Violence in Refugee, Internally Displaced, and Post-conflict Settings* (30 April, 2002)

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/s/40B847015485B34749256BFE0006E603>  
A Charade of Concern: The Abandonment of Colombia's Forcibly Displaced (May 1999)

<http://www.womenscommission.org>

Unseen Millions: The Catastrophe of Internal Displacement in Colombia (March 2002)

<http://www.womenscommission.org>

Forced Migration Online

Country Guide: Colombia

<http://www.forcedmigration.org>

UNICEF

R. Muggah and E. Berman (March 2001) "Small Arms Survey. Humanitarianism Under Threat: the Humanitarian Impacts of Small Arms and Light Weapons" A Study Commissioned by the Reference Group on Small Arms of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)

<http://www.unicef.org/children-in-war/mainfindings-humimpact.pdf>

Asociación Probienestar de la Familia Colombiana (PROFAMILIA)

Primera Encuesta Nacional de Salud Sexual y Reproductiva entre la Población Desplazada (October 2000-May 2001)

<http://www.disaster.info.desastres.net/desplazados/informes/profamilia/saludsexual.htm>

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Human Rights Situation in Colombia (8 February 2001)

<http://www.unhchr.ch>

UN

Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective. Violence Against Women, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Mission to Colombia (1-7 November 2001)

[http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/E.CN.4.2002.83.ADD.3.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/E.CN.4.2002.83.ADD.3.En?Opendocument)

Terre des Hommes

E. Paez "Girls in the Colombian Armed Groups. A Diagnosis" (September 2001)

<http://www.tdh.ch>

### **3.4 Women in post-conflict settings**

Concern about the gender impact of conflicts and displacement has also more recently extended to post-conflict settings. Research has shown once again that women and men experience post-conflict situations differently, and that women are discriminated against in return and resettlement policies. Women's human rights are often ignored in post-conflict periods, despite the fact that they are still largely vulnerable to GBV, especially in those areas where security is still a concern. In addition, women may be ignored in compensation packages or may become more dependent on men due to the loss of income from their traditional activities and



other changes in resource-use patterns. Widows and other lone women are particularly vulnerable, especially in those societies where women do not have independent rights to property. The lack of specific attention to the reintegration of female soldiers is also a problem.

Despite all of this, it is important to recognize that women are not just victims in this process, but that they often show amazing courage, skills and strengths. Studies have shown that at times of crisis women seem to have greater resilience and are more adaptable, they assume new roles, become leaders and hold families and communities together. Some organizations working with forced migrants have laid emphasis on the empowerment of women through their active participation in conflict and post-conflict contexts. By supporting their activities and leadership in displacement situations, the organizations hope that women's roles will be enhanced in the post-conflict settings and gender inequalities balanced. Similar concerns have also led to calls for greater involvement of women in peace processes and settlements, as well as in reconstruction initiatives.

#### **Websites:**

The Brookings Institution

R. Cohen "Reintegrating Refugees and the Internally Displaced". Conference on Intrastate Conflicts and Women, 12 December 2000

<http://www.brook.edu/printme.wbs?page=/pagedefs/8665dae4c649ff3a558a8b00a141465.xml>

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)

Vella, D. (2001) *War has changed our life, not our spirit. Experiences of Forcibly Displaced Women*. Italy: JRS.

<http://www.jesref.org>

PRIO

Barth, E.F. "Reintegration of Female Soldiers in Africa: A Comparative Study"

<http://www.prio.no/research/project.asp?ProjektID=48>

*Forced Migration Review*, 11 (Gender and Displacement)

M. Muna and R. Watson "The UN Security Council addresses women's role in peace"

<http://www.fmreview.org>

Forced Migration Online

N. Abdo "Engendering Compensation: Making Refugee Women Count!"

Prepared for the International Development Research Centre (March 2000, Ottawa)

[http://www.fmo.qeh.ox.ac.uk/Repository/Oxford/2000/03/02/302838684-2000-03-02.PDF#OLVO\\_Entity\\_0001](http://www.fmo.qeh.ox.ac.uk/Repository/Oxford/2000/03/02/302838684-2000-03-02.PDF#OLVO_Entity_0001)

#### **3.4.1 Case study: Rwanda**

Between 800,000 and 1 million people were killed in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, when hard-line Hutu groups sought to eliminate Tutsi and Hutu moderates. After the Tutsis won the upper hand in the war, an estimated 3 million people became uprooted as Hutus fled to neighbouring countries in fear of

reprisals; at the same time, exiled Tutsis returned to Rwanda. In 1996, many Hutu refugees chose or were forced to return to a deeply traumatized country.

### *GBV*

During the conflict, the result of old ethnic hatreds, thousands of women and girls were the target of gender-based violence – estimates are that 250,000-500,000 survived rape (in addition to all those who were raped before being killed). Atrocities committed against women and girls also included sexual slavery, forced incest, purposeful HIV transmission and impregnation, and genital mutilation. GBV was present before 1994. Most Rwandan women were confined to agricultural and domestic work, and discrimination against women and girls was common, as evidenced, for instance, in existing practices of forced marriage and forced sex in marriage. However, problems like domestic violence, sexual abuse, HIV-infection, and prostitution, among others, have increased in the climate of devastation left by the conflict.

### *Reconstruction*

The genocide had a huge impact on sex ratios. Post-1994, 54 per cent of the population was female and 34 per cent of households were headed by women, 60 per cent of them widows (UNHCR, 2002). Amidst the destruction and trauma left by the war, women and girls have shown an amazing capacity to get on with their lives, struggling not only to survive but also to participate fully in the reconstruction of their country and in the process of redefining gender roles and relations, as well as ethnic divides. There are thousands of grassroots women's organizations linked by networks across the country helping women to reconstruct their lives and to participate fully in society. They have had the support of the Ministry for Gender and Women in Development (Migeprofe), created post-conflict, and the international community, especially through the UNHCR's Rwanda Women's Initiative (RWI).

### *The RWI*

The main aim of the RWI, launched in 1997, was the "empowerment of women in economic, social, and political life" (UNHCR 2002). The initiative targeted the most vulnerable through support for local women's projects in education, income generation, and psycho-social support, among others, while at the same time boosting the capacity of such women's groups and promoting gender issues at national level (through the creation of Migeprofe, for instance). However, despite some successes, the RWI has also had some shortcomings. Critics argue that the initiative has focused on basic needs and has not done much to promote further strategic gender interests. Lack of funding has also been a problem.

### **Websites:**

WCRWC:

You Cannot Dance if You Cannot Stand. A Review of the Rwanda Women's Initiative and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' Commitment to Gender Equality in Post-conflict Societies" (April 2001)

<http://www.womenscommission.org>

Women's Initiatives in UNHCR, UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women and Guidelines on Their Protection. An Assessment of Ten Years of Implementation.

An independent assessment by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, May 2002

<http://www.womenscommission.org/reports/pdf/unhcr2002.pdf>

Post-genocide Situation in Rwanda (18-28 February 2001), *If Not Now, When? Addressing Gender-based Violence in Refugee, Internally Displaced, and Post-conflict Settings. A Global Overview*

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/s/40B847015485B34749256BFE0006E603>

USCR

Rwandan women seek solutions (Summer 1997)

[http://www.refugee.org/world/articles/rwandawomen\\_wor\\_sum97.htm](http://www.refugee.org/world/articles/rwandawomen_wor_sum97.htm)

*Forced Migration Review*, 11 (Gender and Displacement)

D. Quick "Redefining the roles of women in post-genocide Rwanda"

<http://www.fmreview.org>

### **3.4.2 Case study: The Balkans**

The conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s left many dead and thousands uprooted, most of them civilians. At the end of the war in Bosnia in 1995, there were more than 1 million IDPs and 1.3 million refugees abroad, while conflict in Kosovo in the late 1990s resulted in more than 1.5 million people displaced. While most ethnic Albanians had returned to Kosovo by the end of 1999, this was accompanied by an exodus of Serbs and Roma from the province. According to the UNHCR, around 2 million people have now returned to their homes, but an estimated 1.3 million people are still displaced (UNHCR).

The wars in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia attracted a lot of international interest and involvement. The plight of women and children received special attention. The use of rape, and sexual abuses committed against women, as part of 'ethnic cleansing' throughout the war were widely documented. Aid organizations became heavily involved in protection and assistance, and special programmes were created to cater for the needs of refugee and internally displaced women and girls (with more or less success). Two special efforts at integrating women in return and reconstruction initiatives post-conflict were the Bosnia Women's Initiative (BWI) and the Kosovo Women's Initiative (KWI).

#### *Bosnia*

The BWI was established in 1996 to promote the "empowerment of Bosnian women" through projects in psycho-social support, community services, education and income generation (WCRWC, 2002). Assistance and funding have been generous. After the initial focus on emergency assistance and psycho-social work for reconstruction, most finance has been allocated to income-generating projects (73 per cent), in line with general donors' priorities. This has been criticized because many women are still suffering from wartime trauma and need support, especially those that have been affected by rape, sexual abuse, and other types of GBV. Protection and security remain key concerns for women in the reconstruction phase. Local women's groups have criticized the BWI for not working directly with them. Greater involvement of local women in decision-making within the initiative is needed in order to take into account real needs and desires, as well as to make the programmes and their results self-sustainable.

### *Kosovo*

The KWI, established later (mid-1999), learned some lessons from the Bosnia context. Women and children in Kosovo suffered disproportionately from displacement, with many pregnant and nursing women among those forced to flee. Many of the displaced were from poor regions and facilities for refugees in conflict-ridden Macedonia or poor Albania (or indeed for IDPs) were horrendous. Aid delivery and assistance for the displaced was difficult during the conflict, with a lack of medical care and psycho-social support for women affected by GBV – displaced men were also severely traumatized, and often women had to support them as well as the rest of the family. Even after the war, levels of domestic violence, rape, trafficking, and abduction of women and girls were high.

Women's groups in Kosovo, after the experience of Bosnia, were highly organized and active in assistance and protection. They also benefited more from international/NGO programmes. The KWI, for instance, had a broader focus that included protection issues, GBV, reproductive health, and support for capacity-building of women's groups. Despite this, there have been criticisms regarding lack of respect for local agendas and failure to support women in leadership roles and their marginalization in development and peace plans.

### **Websites:**

UNHCR:

The Balkans

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/teXis/vtx/balkans>

WCRWC:

Women's Initiatives in UNHCR. UNHCR Policy on Refugee Women and Guidelines on Their Protection. An Assessment of Ten Years of Implementation. An independent assessment by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, May 2002

<http://www.womenscommission.org/reports/pdf/unhcr2002.pdf>

“Post-conflict situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina” (18-27 June 2001) and “Post-conflict situation in Kosovo” (June 11-16, 2001), *If Not Now, When? Addressing Gender-based Violence in Refugee, Internally Displaced, and Post-conflict Settings. A Global Overview.*

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/s/40B847015485B34749256BFE0006E603>

“Refugee and Internally Displaced Women and Children in Serbia and Montenegro” (September 2001)

<http://www.womenscommission.org>

Human Rights Watch

World Report 2001: “Women in Conflict and Refugees”

<http://www.hrw.org>

The Global IDP Project

<http://www.iddproject.org>

USCR

“Controversy Swirls Around Women’s Initiatives in Kosovo”

[http://www.refugees.org/world/articles/kosovo\\_rr00\\_8.htm](http://www.refugees.org/world/articles/kosovo_rr00_8.htm)

*Forced Migration Review*, 11 (Gender and Displacement)

R. Wareham and D. Quick “Problems or partners? Working with women to rebuild the Balkans”

<http://www.fmreview.org>

### **3.5 A gendered approach to forced migration**

Despite the fact that the needs and strengths of women in forced migration are not yet fully addressed, the move away towards a more gendered approach has focused attention on wider issues. If the aim is to influence gender roles and relations to eliminate inequalities in the long-term, greater attention needs to be paid to the impact of policies and programmes on the displaced in general, and women in particular. In some instances, for instance, encouraging women to assume new roles without deeply challenging gender assumptions can merely increase their work burden, or leave them to fulfil functions for which they have no institutional or social support. In other cases, such as in Bosnia, the employment of local women by international organisations meant that women were earning more than men and led to tensions, while the fact that the women were mostly in mid-level positions meant that they had no impact on decision-making or the design of programmes.

#### **3.5.1 Men and conflict-induced displacement**

There are still few studies on the particular impact of conflict and displacement on men. Men are generally seen as the aggressors, but they can also be victims. Men and boys are exposed to gender-based violence; they are sometimes raped or sexually abused; or they can be forced to rape and abuse women relatives. In addition, young men and boys are vulnerable to forced recruitment by armed groups, torture, detention, physical attack, and disappearances.

The general impression that seems to emerge from gender analysis is that men find it more difficult to cope with displacement, as it often threatens their traditional gender roles and positions of authority within the family and community. Attempts to improve women refugee’s agency and to empower them often lead to men resenting such challenges to gender roles and relations, and sometimes is perceived as bad by women themselves. Another common source of complaint in such contexts is the changes in relations between generations. For example, in Lukole Refugee Camp in Tanzania, Burundian refugees saw changes in gender relations as a sign of “moral decay” and complained that “women no longer respected their husbands...(they) find UNHCR a better husband” (Turner, 2000). In an attempt to alter such changes, some young men in the camp used the opportunities provided by relief work to overcome age hierarchies and assume positions of power and leadership.

Young men and boys have been identified in some displacement contexts as one of the groups in need of more urgent attention. This is the case, for example, among the internally displaced in Colombia. Some research has pointed out that women and children are now recognized as vulnerable groups and receive special attention from agencies, including activities aimed at improving women’s awareness, health,

employment capabilities, and leadership. On the other hand, men are treated as heads of households, not as gendered actors themselves, which particularly disadvantages young men. However, to make improvements in women's lives last, it is precisely young men and their gender roles and identities that need to be targeted.

**Websites:**

*Forced Migration Review*, 9 (Gender and Displacement)

S. Turner "Vindicating masculinity: the fate of promoting gender equality" and C. Brun "Making young displaced men visible"

<http://www.fmreview.org>

UNHCR

S. Turner "Angry young men in camps: gender, age and class relations among Burundian refugees in Tanzania", *Working Paper No 9*, 1999

<http://www.dfait->

[maeci.gc.ca/genderandpeacekeeping/resources/6\\_Angry\\_Young\\_Men.pdf](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/genderandpeacekeeping/resources/6_Angry_Young_Men.pdf)

ACORD

J. El-Bushra, A. El-Karib and A. Hadjipateras "Gender-sensitive Programme Design and Planning in Conflict-affected situations", Research Report (January 2002)

<http://www.acord.org.uk/Publications/G&Cresearch/ACORD%20Gender%20and%20Conflict%20Research%20Report.pdf>

## **4. Other types of forced migration**

### **4.1 Development-induced displacement**

Conflicts are not the only cause of forced migration. Development projects, including dams, roads, ports, railways, mines, and logging, displace millions of people throughout the world. According to the World Bank, over 10 million people are forced to leave their homes every year by development projects – with great risk of impoverishment. Although the exact number of development-induced displaced people (DIDPs) is difficult to know, estimates are that in the last decade 90-100 million people have been displaced by urban, irrigation and power projects alone, with the number of people displaced by urban development becoming greater than those displaced by large infrastructure projects (such as dams). DIDPs outnumber refugees, with the added problem that their plight is often more concealed. DIDPs are not usually covered by the protection afforded by refugee and humanitarian law, and assistance is very poor (they are even more disadvantaged than conflict-induced IDPs). Even when international donors or organisations create guidelines, enforcement is very difficult.

Development-induced displacement has serious human rights and socio-economic impacts. It breaks up entire communities and families, making it more difficult for them to cope with the uncertainty of resettlement. Risks are usually higher for vulnerable groups, such as children, women, the elderly, ethnic minorities, and indigenous people. The impact of development-induced displacement is also different for women and men. Women, for instance, are usually excluded from compensation policies, while the effects of displacement and resettlement on lone

women, especially female heads of household, are not considered. However, women should not be seen as just victims. While being among the most vulnerable, women have also shown their strengths and capabilities in such contexts, often being at the forefront of resistance to development-induced displacement (see for example, the Save the Narmada Movement).

Respecting the rights of DIDPs is crucial, especially since the risks involved in resettlement are huge. Attention needs to focus on how to reconstitute economic livelihoods and socio-cultural systems; how to deal with relations between resettled communities and the wider regional and national systems; how to address the power differences due to gender, race, ethnicity and other factors; and how to ensure the participation of those affected. Research has shown that a greater flexibility is required in resettlement policies to take into account the particularities of each context and differences of age, gender and wealth within affected populations, as well as increase consultation and involvement of those affected, if outcomes are to be improved and resistance reduced.

**Websites:**

International Network on Displacement and Resettlement (INDR)  
<http://www.displacement.net>

Forced Migration Review 12 (January 2002)  
<http://www.fmreview.org>

Findings and Recommendations of the First International Conference on  
Development-Induced Displacement and Impoverishment  
<http://www.ted-downing.com/OXFORD/recs95.htm>

Friends of River Narmada  
<http://www.narmada.org>

**4.2 Disaster-induced displacement**

Natural disasters have caused major loss of life and widespread social, economic, and environmental destruction over the last decade. Usually, it is less-developed countries and/or regions that are affected most, with those most vulnerable in such areas at higher risk. Disasters affect men and women differently, and also have a different impact depending on the cultural and socio-economic context. This is important for disaster reduction approaches and sustainable development.

Women, due to their greater marginalization and gender inequalities, are thought to be more at risk, although there is a lack of gender-sensitive statistics. Their vulnerability arises from their unequal work burden, due to productive and reproductive responsibilities, their lack of control over resources, restricted mobility, limited education and employment opportunities.

Bangladesh, for example, has been hit by many disasters since its formation in 1971, with the loss of many lives and much destruction. Those worst affected have been the poorest, with specific impact on poor, rural women because of cultural and gender ideologies – for instance, the moral and economic dependency of women on male relatives, issues of ‘purity’, restrictions on women’s mobility and paid work.

All of these make it more difficult for women to cope with disaster-induced displacement and life in camps - especially hard for women with no male protection and female-headed households. Both during disaster and after, women enjoy less protection and fewer resources for recovery.

However, once again, is important to avoid generalizations and be aware of context specificities, as well as to recognize women's (and men's) agency in disaster situations. There is a need for more research on the gender impact of disaster-induced displacement and for mainstreaming of gender issues in disaster reduction and relief.

**Websites:**

International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR)

S. Briceño "Gender Mainstreaming in Disaster Reduction". Panel presentation for the Commission on the Status of Women, 6 March 2002, New York

<http://www.unisdr.org/unidr/gender>

**5. Conclusions**

Gender and forced migration as an approach, both in research and humanitarian assistance, is still evolving. There is increased awareness of the differences in the gender impact of development, whether caused by conflict, development, or disaster. International and humanitarian organizations working in the field are slowly taking in these considerations, but implementation of gender guidelines and policies is still weak. Also, while gender issues have gained prominence in the protection of and assistance to refugees, and to a lesser extent IDPs, in the context of conflicts, the same cannot be said of development- and disaster-induced displacement.

Some general trends can be observed on the impact of displacement on men and women. Women, for instance, are more vulnerable to sexual and other types of gender-based violence, and they are frequently forced to cope with more and different roles in the search for their survival and that of their families. They experience gender-based discrimination both during displacement and in post-conflict or resettlement settings. Organizations working in forced migration have recognized this and special programmes have been created to address such inequalities. Sometimes, this has led to women acquiring increased skills, confidence, and gender and political consciousness. On the other hand, men seem to find it more difficult to cope with the disruption of displacement and the challenges to their traditional gender roles and identity. Their experience of displacement as gendered subjects needs to be explored further.

However, these are just generalizations. Many other factors have an impact on how men and women experience forced migration, including class, age, race, ethnicity, and rural/urban differences, as well as wider political and socio-economic issues. This does not mean that there is no need for specific attention to women, since in most cases they remain amongst the most vulnerable groups of displaced people and they are under-represented in decision-making in such contexts. But if we assume that to tackle forced migration effectively and reduce future displacement all sources of inequality should be addressed, then gender roles and relations are



important, and these involve both women and men. This is debatable, since some have questioned the role, and indeed power, of the international humanitarian community to influence gender relations in a positive and lasting manner. Despite this, researchers and field workers have identified the importance of seeing displaced people as individuals with different identities and roles, in different contexts; and acknowledging their agency rather than considering them passive victims, if lasting and sustainable solutions to forced migration are to be achieved.

## **6. Resources**

### **6.1 Web-based**

ACORD

[www.acord.org.uk](http://www.acord.org.uk)

Amnesty International

[www.web.amnesty.org](http://www.web.amnesty.org)

Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Gender and Peacekeeping Online Training Course

[www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca)

Canadian Council for Refugees

[www.web.net/~ccr/gendpers.html](http://www.web.net/~ccr/gendpers.html)

Conciliation Resources

[www.c-r.org](http://www.c-r.org)

Consultoría Para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento

[www.codhes.org.co](http://www.codhes.org.co)

Findings and Recommendations of the First International Conference on Development-Induced Displacement and Impoverishment

[www.ted-downing.com/OXFORD/recs95.htm](http://www.ted-downing.com/OXFORD/recs95.htm)

Forced Migration Online

[www.forcedmigration.org](http://www.forcedmigration.org)

Forced Migration Review

[www.fmreview.org](http://www.fmreview.org)

Friends of River Narmada

[www.narmada.org](http://www.narmada.org)

Human Rights Watch

[www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)

Humanitarianism and War Project's NGO Policy Dialogue Series

[Hwproject.tufts.edu](http://Hwproject.tufts.edu)

InterAction

[www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org)

International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM)

[www.iasfm.org](http://www.iasfm.org)

International Committee of the Red Cross

[www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org)

International Network on Displacement and Resettlement (INDR)

[www.displacement.net](http://www.displacement.net)

International Peace Research Institute (PRIO, Oslo)

[www.prio.no](http://www.prio.no)

International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR)

[www.unisdr.org](http://www.unisdr.org)

Jesuit Refugee Service

[www.jesref.org](http://www.jesref.org)

Norwegian Refugee Council/Global IDP Project

[www.idpproject.org](http://www.idpproject.org)

[www.nrc.no](http://www.nrc.no)

Profamilia

[www.disaster.info.desastres.net/desplazados/informes/profamilia/saludsexual.htm](http://www.disaster.info.desastres.net/desplazados/informes/profamilia/saludsexual.htm)

Semana

[www.semana.com](http://www.semana.com)

Terre des Hommes

[www.tdh.ch](http://www.tdh.ch)

The Brookings Institution

[www.brook.edu](http://www.brook.edu)

United Nations (UN)

[www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)

[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

UN Development Programme (UNDP)

[www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR)

[www.unhchr.org](http://www.unhchr.org)

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

[www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)

U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR)  
www.refugees.org

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children  
www.womenscommission.org

World Health Organisation (WHO)  
www.who.int

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