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BACKGROUND PAPER

Topic: Women work and poverty in African countries affected by social conflicts

UN Women

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Committee Background



UN Women supports UN member states in setting global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design the necessary laws, policies, programs and services to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls around the world. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals for women and girls a reality and supports women's equal participation in all areas of life, focusing on four strategic priorities:

Women lead leadership systems, participate in them and benefit equally from them. Women have income security, decent jobs and economic autonomy.

All women and girls live a life free of violence of any kind. Women and girls contribute and have a greater impact in building sustainable peace and resilience. They also benefit from natural disaster and conflict prevention and humanitarian measures. UN Women also coordinates and contributes to the work of the United Nations system on gender equality and all consultations and agreements related to the 2030 Agenda.

The company is committed to making gender equality a foundation for the Sustainable Development Goals and building a more inclusive world.

Introduction of the Topic



Economic opportunities for women and men. A growing body of research examines the impact of conflict on women's employment opportunities. Some evidence comes from research on the impact of economic shocks and recessions on women's labor force participation, since conflict is often associated with economic downturns. This is explored later in this section.

When conflict occurs, the rule of law breaks down, freedom of movement is restricted, and institutions and services are weakened, leaving people without access to social services and information, as well as food and livelihoods. The situation affects the entire population, but women are particularly affected. Research shows that female-headed households are more vulnerable to stress and less able to absorb shocks due to gender inequality, cultural constraints and the feminization of poverty. Conflict affects women and men differently, and existing gender inequalities are exacerbated in times of conflict.

On the other hand, violent conflict contributes to poverty by causing damage to infrastructure, institutions and production; the destruction of assets; the breakup of communities and social networks; forced displacement; increased unemployment and inflation; changes in access to and relationship with local exchange, employment, reducing human development, credit and insurance markets; falls in spending on social services; and death and injury to people.



Evolution of the Topic

Women and girls make up a large proportion of internally displaced persons and refugees. In Burkina Faso, 51% of internally displaced persons are girls under 14 years of age. Furthermore, gender norms that link masculinity to aggression increase the likelihood that men will commit violence against those over whom they have power, often women and children.

Overall, conflict increases women's risk and vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence. The Club of the Sahel and West Africa's publication on "Women and Conflict in West Africa" shows that Islamist groups and militias specifically target women.

External Actions



UN-Women is supporting efforts for peace and security in the Sahel and Central Africa regions, which is experiencing complex security, political and humanitarian challenges that are further complicated by the presence of armed groups and devastating human rights violations. Considered as one of the poorest in the world, the Sahel region carries a set of social, political peace and security as well as humanitarian and environment related challenges. It is home to the resounding constraints of extreme poverty, exacerbated by the effects of climate change, frequent food crises, unresolved internal tensions, the reality of violent extremism (VE) including women and youth radicalization, illicit trafficking, and terrorist-linked security threats.

All UN-Women country offices are also implementing strong programs on WPS and humanitarian response. Nine countries of the Sahel covered by the UNISS have already developed their National Action Plans for the implementation of UNSCR1325.

In the East and Southern Africa region, UNWomen is supporting countries faced with humanitarian emergencies mostly climate induced disasters including drought, flooding, and cyclones. Currently, the Horn of Africa faces one of the worst droughts affecting over twenty million people mostly women and girls. The situation is exacerbated by protracted conflicts in Somalia, South Sudan and recent instabilities in Ethiopia, Sudan, and northern Mozambique. Ukraine crisis has resulted in skyrocketing basic commodity prices, further reducing the purchasing power of most poor people, especially women and youth.



Committee Focus

Founded in 2010, UN Women is the United Nations agency that promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women. Its focus is to promote and protect the rights of women and girls around the world.

UN Women advocates for gender equality at all levels. Examining the intersection of women's work, poverty, and social conflicts specifically within African countries. It aims to understand how social conflicts exacerbate poverty among women and hinder their ability to engage in productive work, thereby perpetuating cycles of economic hardship and vulnerability.

The focus includes analyzing the unique challenges faced by women in conflict-affected regions, exploring the dynamics of their participation in the economy, and identifying strategies to alleviate poverty and promote women's empowerment despite the adverse circumstances of social conflicts.

Conclusion

In African countries struggling with social conflict, the intersectionality of gender and poverty becomes particularly evident in the context of women's work.

The impact of conflict extends beyond immediate security concerns and permeates all aspects of society, with women often bearing a disproportionate burden.

In these contexts, women face not only the direct impacts of conflict, such as displacement and violence, but also systemic challenges in accessing education, health care and economic opportunities. Their role as caregivers in the family and community is reinforced, further limiting their ability to engage in income-generating activities.

The relationship between women's work and poverty in conflict-affected African countries is complex. Traditional gender roles often persist, forcing women into informal and low-paid jobs. At the same time, the conflict has destroyed existing economic structures, leaving women with little means to support themselves and their families. This economic deprivation reinforces the vicious cycle of poverty.

Solving this problem requires multifaceted efforts. Policymakers and international organizations should prioritize creating opportunities for women to participate in the formal economy through targeted education and training programs. Furthermore, initiatives that promote women's rights and challenge traditional gender norms can foster long-term social change.



Participation List



Algeria



Angola



Cameroon



Canada



Czech Republic



**Democratic
Republic of
Congo**



Denmark



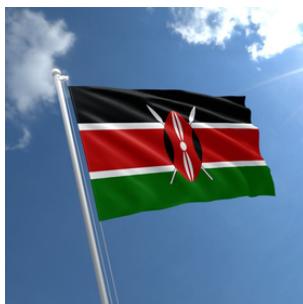
Egypt



Ethiopia



Ghana



Kenya



Nigeria

Participation List



Norway



Somalia



South Africa



Sweden



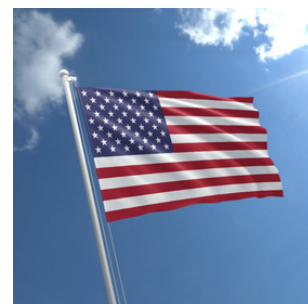
France



South Korea



United Kingdom



United States

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