

THE DISPROPORTIONATE EFFECTS OF WAR AND CONFLICT ON WOMEN AND GIRLS

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I. Introduction

“Often, a conflict’s gender dynamics reflect sexist social norms: Men are expected to fight; women are forced to flee.”¹

Across the globe, women and girls are particularly vulnerable in times of war. During conflict, existing inequalities are magnified, infrastructure and social relations are broken down, and human rights are at risk. Due to a combination of factors, women bear the brunt of the secondary and lasting effects of war and conflict. Women are affected in many ways, including food insecurity, displacement, heightened human trafficking, and disrupted access to reproductive and health care.² What’s more, women have been historically left out of peace talks and conflict prevention despite data showing a substantially higher degree of success and longevity for peace agreements negotiated by women. Additionally, women are often raped by parties in conflict situations as systemic rape has historically been used as a tactic of war.³ Even though women remain the minority of combatants and perpetrators of war, they increasingly suffer the most harm.⁴ Many of these issues have been prevalent consequences of war for hundreds of years, but unfortunately are not substantially improving. Thus, while the current efforts of the United Nations and other international actors are important, more protections and mitigating measures are necessary in order to prevent the disproportionate effects of war and conflict from falling on women and children during future conflicts.

Part One of this Article details the impacts of food insecurity, displacement, heightened human trafficking, and disrupted access to reproductive and health care on women in the context of wartime. Part Two explores the historic exclusion of women from peace negotiations. Part Three discusses the ongoing crisis faced by women and girls in Ukraine. Finally, Part Four provides an overview of the United Nations’ resolutions, programs, and support.

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¹ United Nations Foundation, *5 Ways Conflict Prevents Girls and Women From Being Equal Everywhere*, EQUALEVERYWHERE.ORG (Mar. 4, 2022), https://equaleverywhere.org/story/5-ways-conflict-prevents-girls-and-women-from-being-equal-everywhere/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwn9CgBhDjARIsAD15h0BD_VuGbBpxDKTyP6INFqWXEwY12ccGD5Y-KunL0tmB6dKoSzD5w8QaAqUkEALw_wcB.

² *Id.*

³ Tadziripa Madzima, *The effects of conflict are felt hardest by women and children*, PEACEINSIGHT.ORG (May 10, 2013), <https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/articles/effects-conflict-women-children/?location=&theme=women-peace-security>.

⁴ *Id.*

II. Food Insecurity and Famine During Wartime

Hunger is recognized as both a “cause and result” of conflict.⁵ In fact, conflict is the main driver of hunger in places with food crises.⁶ Conflict often displaces farmers, destroys agricultural crops, disrupts food markets, and hikes food prices.⁷ Many of these disruptions disproportionately affect women, who produce 60–80% of food in developing countries and over half of all food production worldwide.⁸ Disruptions to women’s crucial role in food systems both impedes their income generation and leaves them vulnerable to food insecurity. While the global frequency of famines has been decreasing over time, prolonged conflicts like war have become an increasingly prevalent driver of food insecurity, hunger, and malnutrition.⁹ In many cases, conflict leads to difficult decisions about food supplies and rationing. Consequently, women are particularly affected because they are expected to provide food for their families, their children, and themselves as primary caregivers.¹⁰

A particularly vulnerable group during times of food insecurity is pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.¹¹ A balanced diet and secure source of food is critical for breastfeeding mothers with heightened nutritional needs in order to produce healthy breast milk.¹² Breast milk quality can greatly suffer if the mother lacks adequate nutrition. In emergency situations like conflict and war, breastfeeding is pivotal to protecting the lives of newborns because of life-saving antibodies contained in breast milk. These antibodies protect infants from illnesses like pneumonia, one of the leading causes of child death across the globe.¹³ During wartime, hygiene and safety are often compromised, leaving babies vulnerable to illness and infection. In fact, as of 2021, over one million pregnant and breastfeeding mothers were “acutely malnourished,” a number that is only predicted to increase without intervention.¹⁴ Because maternal nutrition is imperative for

⁵ Marie Haga, *Breaking the vicious cycle of hunger and conflict*, UN.ORG (2021). <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/news/breaking-vicious-circle-hunger-and-conflict>.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Food Security and Gender*, UNITED STATES AGENCY OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/46460857.pdf> (last visited Mar. 23, 2023).

⁹ Eran Bendavid, Ties Boerma, Nadia Akseer, Ana Langer, Espoir Bwenge Malembaka, Emelda A. Okiro, Paul H. Wise, Sam Heft-Neal, Robert E. Black, Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, *The effects of armed conflict on the health of women and children*, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE (Jan. 24, 2021), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7612212/>.

¹⁰ Alicia Depler, *American Women in World War Two: The Impact of Rationing and Shortages on Eating and Food Procurement*, JOURNALS.PSU.EDU (May 7, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.18113/P8ne4260343>.

¹¹ UN News, *Motherhood on the brink in Yemen*, NEWS.UN.ORG (Mar. 26, 2021), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1088352>.

¹² Lauren Landis, *Breastfeeding can be the difference between life and death*, WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (Aug. 1, 2017), <https://www.wfp.org/stories/breastfeeding-can-be-difference-between-life-and-death>.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ UN NEWS, *supra* note 11.

both mother and baby, malnutrition puts both pregnant mothers and newborn babies at serious risk.¹⁵ As a prominent factor driving food insecurity and famine, war and conflict often exacerbates this issue for women and children caught in the crossfire.

III. Displacement of Women and Children During Wartime

Women and children make up the “overwhelming majority” of people displaced due to conflict.¹⁶ The total number of displaced people globally increased to over 100 million in 2022, a new record.¹⁷ This number reflects a steady upward trend from years prior due to outbreaks of violence and prolonged conflicts in places like Ukraine, Ethiopia, Syria, and Myanmar.¹⁸

Often in times of conflict, men are expected to fight, and women are forced to flee.¹⁹ When conflict breaks out, women bear the responsibility of getting themselves and their families to safety.²⁰ If women do not flee and find refuge, then they face trauma like physical injury, sexual violence, or even death.²¹ Further, many refugees displaced due to war and conflict are not able to return. In fact, in 2021, less than 6% of the total forcibly displaced population returned to their country of origin.²² This means that displacement due to conflict and emergencies can often separate families for prolonged periods of time or even indefinitely. This can lead to severe and lasting harm. In fact, history suggests that separating children from their primary caregivers—most often mothers—will cause “enduring harm.”²³ For instance, during World War II, evacuated children were traumatized more by their family separation than by the bombings they survived.²⁴ This highlights the incredible importance of familial support and the lasting detriment that separation can have, especially when due to conflict. Discussed further in the final section of this Article, the United Nations Population Fund provides protection for many young girls and pregnant women who are forced to flee for their lives, but these sites are among very few safe spaces currently available for women and girls.²⁵

¹⁵ UNICEF, *Maternal nutrition*, <https://www.unicef.org/nutrition/maternal> (last visited Mar. 23, 2023).

¹⁶ Bendavid, Boerma, Akseer, Langer, Malembaka, Okido, Wise, Heft-Neal, Black, & Bhutta, *supra* note 9.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ United Nations Foundation, *supra* note 1.

²⁰ Madzima, *supra* note 3.

²¹ *Id.*

²² The UN Refugee Agency, *Global Trends Report 2021*, <https://www.unhcr.org/media/40152> (last visited Mar. 23, 2023).

²³ Judith S. Lewis, *What World War II evacuation policy teaches us about the dangers of family separation*, WASH. POST (Sept. 27, 2019 at 6:00AM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/09/27/what-world-war-ii-evacuation-policy-teaches-us-about-dangers-family-separation/>.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ UN NEWS, *supra* note 11.

IV. Heightened Trafficking and Gender-Based Violence During Wartime

Historically, rates of gender-based violence and human trafficking increase during times of conflict due to “rising instability, poverty, and a weakening rule of law.”²⁶ The unstable conditions of war contribute to increased displacement and overall disorder, leaving vulnerable populations like women and children at a higher risk for trafficking.²⁷ People displaced by conflict often face violence, poverty, separation from family, an absence of law enforcement, and little to no access to education, allowing trafficking to flourish.²⁸ Further, refugees needing to flee war and persecution are often taken advantage of by traffickers who may falsely promise them safety or protection.²⁹

Human trafficking can take many forms, including forced labor, domestic servitude, child soldiers, sex trafficking, and forced marriage.³⁰ One thing all of these forms of trafficking have in common is their exploitative purpose. This exploitation is historically linked to existing structural inequalities, gender-based and racial discrimination, poverty, and weaknesses in child protection systems.³¹ Beyond the obvious detriment to the trafficked persons, trafficking contributes to continued instability, conflict, and displacement. Further, it hinders the processes of peace negotiations and returning to peace and security.

While trafficking for the purpose of forced marriage is not explicitly recognized as a form of exploitation in the UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol, it is still characterized as a form of trafficking by many human rights groups due to the lack of free and full consent by at least one party.³² This form of exploitation most often targets women and girls, leveraging on stereotypical gender roles and subjecting the targets to violence, abuse, and coercion.³³ It occurs at the margins of conflict, often as a result of poverty and desperation. Some families have felt that they had “no option” but to trade away their daughters for marriage in exchange for money to support the rest of their families.³⁴ In desolate socio-economic conditions, oftentimes having one less dependent to care for and the monetary incentive of a dowry payment presents an impossible choice that

²⁶ United Nations Foundation, *supra* note 1.

²⁷ *Human Trafficking and Armed Conflict*, HUMAN TRAFFICKINGSEARCH.ORG (Mar. 9, 2017), <https://humantraffickingsearch.org/201738human-trafficking-and-armed-conflict/>.

²⁸ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018, Booklet 2: Trafficking in persons in the context of armed conflict*, UNODC.ORG (Dec., 2018), https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GloTIP2018_BOOKLET_2_Conflict.pdf.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Human Trafficking and Armed Conflict*, *supra* note 27.

³¹ United Nations Human Rights, *Trafficking persons in conflict situations: the world must strengthen prevention and accountability*, UNITED NATIONS (July 29, 2022) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/07/trafficking-persons-conflict-situations-world-must-strengthen-prevention-and>.

³² UNDOC, *supra* note 28.

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ *Id.*

traffickers may take advantage of in order to coerce vulnerable families into exploitative situations.³⁵

V. Disrupted Access to Reproductive Care and Health Care During Wartime

The destruction of war also has a detrimental effect on women's access to reproductive and health care. War often destroys a country's health infrastructure because many times hospitals are bombed, health workers become overwhelmed and understaffed, and electricity, water, sanitation, and supplies are disrupted.³⁶ In the midst of this, reproductive care is not and, oftentimes, cannot be prioritized.³⁷ Because these dangerous conditions are not conducive to healthy or safe pregnancies, many women and girls without access to viable reproductive care suffer as a result.³⁸ Additionally, research shows a link between conflict and malnutrition, physical injuries, acute and infectious diseases, poor mental health, and poor sexual and reproductive health.³⁹

The conflict in Yemen is one prominent example of this. According to a 2021 report by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), only 20% of the country's remaining hospitals in Yemen are able to provide maternal and child health services.⁴⁰ Consequently, a woman dies in childbirth an average of every two hours, almost always from preventable causes.⁴¹ Other examples throughout history include the horrific abuses against women and children in the over one million children killed during the Holocaust and the many women and children raped or killed during the Rwandan Genocide.⁴² The women who have survived these atrocities often must live with "the vivid and terrifying images of rape, war, and death" for the rest of their lives.⁴³ What's more, many women in these conflict situations also suffer from sexually transmitted diseases, stigmatization, and unwanted pregnancies—many of which could be eased by viable access to health and reproductive care.⁴⁴

VI. Historic Exclusion of Women from Peace Negotiations

Although women are disproportionately affected by conflict, they are often denied participation in peace talks and conflict prevention. In fact, according to UN Women, women represented only

³⁵ UNDOC, *supra* note 28.

³⁶ United Nations Foundation, *supra* note 1.

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ Bendavid, Boerma, Akseer, Langer, Malembaka, Okido, Wise, Heft-Neal, Black, & Bhutta, *supra* note 9.

⁴⁰ UN NEWS, *supra* note 11.

⁴¹ *Id.*; United Nations Foundation, *supra* note 1.

⁴² Madzima, *supra* note 3.

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ *Id.*

23% of delegations in UN-supported peace processes in 2020.⁴⁵ Further, in countries affected by or rebuilding from conflict, women’s representation in elected office was just 19% in 2020.⁴⁶ This figure is unfortunate given the fact that research shows that peace agreements made with women involved are “more durable and more effectively carried out”⁴⁷ and up to 64% less likely to fail,⁴⁸ highlighting the need for more women in these critical roles.

There are several reasons for the increased durability of peace agreements made when women are involved. First, women take a more collaborative approach to peace talks across cultural and ethnic divides.⁴⁹ Research shows that this approach—incorporating the concerns of diverse demographics—increases the likelihood of long-term stability.⁵⁰ Second, women are often viewed as “honest brokers” by negotiating parties, increasing the likelihood of reaching an agreement.⁵¹ This is because women traditionally operate outside of the existing power structures and do not control fighting forces, making them more likely than men to be viewed as politically impartial mediators.⁵² Third, women are more likely to advocate for social issues in conflict negotiation beyond the armed conflict such as political and legal reforms, social and economic recovery, and transitional justice concerns,⁵³ making peace agreements more durable in the long run. Finally, women are more likely to apportion post-conflict resources to reconstruction efforts like rebuilding public institutions, schools, healthcare facilities, the food and water supply, and judicial systems.⁵⁴

Despite this, peace negotiations have been the business of “governments, elites—and men.”⁵⁵ In fact, between 1992 and 2019, women on average made up just 13% of negotiators, 6% of mediators, and 6% of signatories in major peace processes around the world.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, part of the reason for this is because women are traditionally viewed as “victims” of conflict

⁴⁵ UN Women, *Facts and figures: Women, peace, and security*, unwomen.org (Oct. 14, 2022), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures#notes>.

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ Jana Krause, *Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace*, TAYLOR & FRANCIS ONLINE (Aug. 10, 2018), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386>; UNITED NATIONS FOUNDATION, *supra* note 1.

⁴⁸ Krause, *supra* note 47.

⁴⁹ Council on Foreign Relations, *Women’s Participation in Peace Processes*, <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/why-it-matters> (last visited Mar. 23, 2023).

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁴ *Id.*

⁵⁵ Veronique Dudouet & Andreas Schädel, *New Evidence: To Build Peace, Include Women from the Start*, UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE (Mar. 11, 2021), <https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/03/new-evidence-build-peace-include-women-start>.

⁵⁶ Council on Foreign Relations, *Women’s Participation in Peace Processes: Explore the Data*, https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/explore-the-data?_gl=1*p0uqtj*_ga*MzgxNDY0NzgxLjE2ODIyOTcxMDk.*_ga_24W5E70YKH*MTY4MjI5NzEwOC4xLjAuMTY4MjI5NzEwOC4wLjAuMA.. (last visited Mar. 23, 2023).

needing protection rather than “agents of change for peace.”⁵⁷ This stereotype creates a roadblock in the way of the elimination of violence against women during and after times of conflict. In reality, women are catalysts of constructive agreements and negotiations who should be central to paving these paths forward.

VII. Ukraine Case Study

The ongoing war in Ukraine provides an illustrative case study of the disproportionate effects of war and conflict on women and girls. In fact, this war is expected to hurt women and girls more than any other population.⁵⁸ These detrimental effects are largely driven by heightened trafficking and gender-based violence, rising poverty levels, and large-scale destruction of infrastructure including hospitals and other healthcare facilities.⁵⁹ Because of this, access to critical sexual and reproductive health care services and information has been extremely fragmented.⁶⁰ Further, gender-based violence has had ample opportunity to flourish with the current diminished law-enforcement capacity and likely remains underreported thus far.⁶¹

The United Nations Population Fund has provided a helpful response to these growing issues. In 2023, they are working to increase their delivery of essential services for women and girls, and mobile clinics and psychosocial support teams are providing reproductive health care services and support in less accessible areas of the country.⁶² Further, they are expanding available safe spaces and online services to support survivors of gender-based violence and distributing life-saving reproductive health, medical and hygiene supplies to health facilities across Ukraine.⁶³

Despite these efforts, a lot of damage has already been done. For instance, the number of miscarriages in Ukraine has increased by approximately 10–15% compared to the pre-war period.⁶⁴ This is largely due to the mass destruction of Ukrainian infrastructure making it difficult, if not impossible, for women and girls to access both basic sexual and reproductive

⁵⁷ Madzima, *supra* note 3.

⁵⁸ Aishwarya Machani, *The War in Ukraine Will Hurt Women and Children Most*, WORLD POLITICS REVIEW (Mar. 8, 2022), <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/for-children-and-women-war-s-impact-is-disproportionately-high/>.

⁵⁹ UN Women, *In Focus: War in Ukraine is a crisis for women and girls*, UNWOMEN.ORG (Feb. 22, 2023), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/in-focus/2022/03/in-focus-war-in-ukraine-is-a-crisis-for-women-and-girls>.

⁶⁰ *Id.*

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² United Nations Population Fund, *Ukraine: Conflict compounds the vulnerabilities of women and girls*, UNFPA.ORG (Feb. 24, 2023), <https://www.unfpa.org/ukraine-war>.

⁶³ *Id.*

⁶⁴ United Nations Population Fund, *A year on from Russia’s full-scale invasion in Ukraine, tackling the onslaught on health and rights for generations of women and girls*, UNFPA.ORG (Feb. 24, 2023), <https://www.unfpa.org/news/year-russias-full-scale-invasion-ukraine-tackling-onslaught-health-and-rights-generations>.

health services and life-saving measures like Caesarian sections or rape kits.⁶⁵ The hundreds of attacks on Ukrainian health facilities since 2022 have been life-or-death devastations for many women who are pregnant or giving birth in this country.⁶⁶

Further, gender-based and domestic violence has risen dramatically since the start of the war in Ukraine. Over three and a half million people—mostly women and girls—are estimated to need gender-based violence protection in 2023.⁶⁷ And because many of these women and children cannot physically escape, survivors are often trapped with their abusers without other viable options.⁶⁸

The shortage of food and fuel because of the war in Ukraine has also had a large effect, disproportionately, on women and children. Even before the war began, women-headed households in Ukraine were more likely to be food insecure.⁶⁹ Now, because of their diminished access to resources like land, credit, and formal employment, these women are suffering much greater effects than their male counterparts.⁷⁰ Specifically, because there is not enough food to feed the hungry, women are the most likely to cut down their own intake to save food for other members of the household, causing malnutrition and mass hunger.⁷¹

VIII. UN Resolutions, Programs, and Support

Over two decades ago, in October 2000, UN Resolution 1325 was adopted. This Resolution recognized the role of women in “strengthening their participation in decision-making, ending sexual violence and impunity, and providing an accountability system.”⁷² It urged all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all UN peace and security efforts. Further, it provided several important operational mandates, including implications for Member States and entities of the UN system.⁷³ Despite the appearance of early momentum from this Resolution,⁷⁴ it has been largely ineffective in action. Women are still experiencing sexual violence and other disproportionate effects of war and conflict at alarming

⁶⁵ *Id.*

⁶⁶ *Id.*

⁶⁷ *Id.*

⁶⁸ *Id.*

⁶⁹ UN Women, *Ukraine and the food and fuel crisis: 4 things to know*, UNWOMEN.ORG (Sept. 22, 2022), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2022/09/ukraine-and-the-food-and-fuel-crisis-4-things-to-know>.

⁷⁰ *Id.*

⁷¹ *Id.*

⁷² Madzima, *supra* note 3.

⁷³ *Landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security*, Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/> (last visited Mar. 24, 2023).

⁷⁴ Rachel Mayanja, *Armed Conflict and Women - 10 Years of Security Council Resolution 1325*, THE UN CHRONICLE (2010), <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/armed-conflict-and-women-10-years-security-council-resolution-1325>.

rates. This indicates that we must go further in protecting women and children in the path of conflict around the world.

One such method is through UN Women supporting projects that focus on “increasing women’s participation in decision-making, promoting the use of gender perspectives in policy development, strengthening the protection of women affected by conflict, countering conflict-related sexual violence, and amplifying calls for accountability and advancing the status of women in post-conflict settings.”⁷⁵ However, while this support is helpful, women must begin to play a more prominent role in peace talks and post-conflict reconstruction in order to bear the fruits of these efforts.

Nevertheless, the UN plays a substantial role in helping women and girls affected by conflict and war. There are several programs and organizations helping to reach this goal. For instance, the UN World Food Program delivers emergency food assistance to more than 100 million people, including those affected in Yemen and Ukraine.⁷⁶ The UN’s refugee agency, UNHCR, provides protection, shelter, health services, and education to ninety-two million people displaced by conflict and crisis.⁷⁷ UN Women supports women’s engagement in peacebuilding and trains UN peacekeepers to detect, address, and stop conflict-related sexual violence.⁷⁸ UN Peacekeeping works to protect civilians, reduce violence, restore the rule of law, and ensure that women’s voices and priorities are central to peace and security decisions at all levels of decision-making.⁷⁹ The UN’s sexual and reproductive health agency, UNFPA, helps an estimated one million pregnant and nursing mothers each year by shipping hygiene supplies and reproductive health kits and training and deploying midwives and mobile health teams.⁸⁰ The UNFPA also provides “safe spaces” for women and girls affected by crises.⁸¹ These are formal or informal spaces where women and girls can safely rebuild their social networks, receive support, acquire skills, access gender-based violence response services, and receive women’s health services.⁸² These efforts reached over 30 million women and girls in 2022 and are expected to expand with adequate funding in 2023.⁸³

⁷⁵ Madzima, *supra* note 3.

⁷⁶ *Who we are*, UN World Food Programme, <https://www.wfp.org/who-we-are> (last visited Mar. 24, 2023).

⁷⁷ *Global Report 2021*, THE UN REFUGEE AGENCY, https://reporting.unhcr.org/globalreport2021/#_ga=2.76608092.895640127.1680301570-1965878280.1679172661 (last visited Mar. 24, 2023).

⁷⁸ *What we do*, UN WOMEN, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do> (last visited Mar. 24, 2023).

⁷⁹ *What we do*, United Nations Peacekeeping, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/what-we-do> (last visited Mar. 24, 2023).

⁸⁰ *Who we are*, United Nations Populations Fund, <https://www.unfpa.org/about-us> (last visited Mar. 24, 2023).

⁸¹ *Women & Girls Safe Spaces*, UNFPA.ORG, <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/woman%20space%20E.pdf> (last visited Mar. 24, 2023).

⁸² *Id.*

⁸³ *Largest ever: UNFPA launches 1.2 billion humanitarian appeal as crises prove devastating for women and girls’ health and rights*, UNFPA PRESS RELEASE (Dec. 13, 2022), <https://www.unfpa.org/press/largest-ever-unfpa-launches-12-billion-humanitarian-appeal-crises-prove-devastating-women-and>.

These programs are all on the frontlines of providing critical support and should be further expanded. In order to do so, these programs need flexible and reliable funding and resources. Given the sheer number of displaced people reaching a new high in 2022, these efforts are more important than ever and should be prioritized by the United States and other powerful international actors. Without these efforts, women and girls would be even more vulnerable to the ravaging effects of conflict and war and may face a prolonged struggle to break the vicious cycles of violence and exploitation as a byproduct. Thus, supporting and expanding these programs must remain in focus.

IX. Conclusion

The disproportionate effects of war and conflict on women manifest in several ways including food insecurity, displacement, heightened human trafficking, and disrupted access to reproductive and health care. Because of this harmful reality, women often bear the brunt of the secondary and lasting effects of war and conflict. Despite research that shows the heightened longevity of peace agreements negotiated by women, women have been historically excluded from these peace talks—a barrier that must be overcome in order to elicit true progress. Further, the UN's past and present resolutions, programs, and support must be expanded and reliably funded to provide adequate support to the increasing number of women and girls in need. This issue must be addressed as a high priority for the United States and other prominent actors to stand up for the international human rights of women and girls across the globe.