



Helpdesk Research Report

Links between women's empowerment (or lack of) and outbreaks of violent conflict

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Question

What evidence exists for links between women's empowerment (or lack of) and outbreaks of violent conflict?¹

Contents

1. Overview
2. Gender inequality and outbreaks of conflict
3. Norms, identities and empowerment
4. Political and civic empowerment
5. Economic empowerment
6. Social empowerment
7. References

¹ See related query: Herbert, S. (2014). *Links between gender-based violence and outbreaks of violent conflict*. GSDRC Helpdesk report 1169. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.
<http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Helpdesk&id=1169>

1. Overview

Empowerment is a process through which individuals or organised groups increase their power and autonomy to achieve certain outcomes they need and desire (Eyben, 2011). Empowerment focuses on supporting disadvantaged people to gain power and exert greater influence over those who control access to key resources (DFID, 2011).² Empowerment is a broad concept including political, economic and social dimensions. Although women's empowerment and gender equality are conceptually different, they are often equated and discussed together as women's empowerment is a strategy to tackle gender inequality.

Literature base

Different links between empowerment, gender equality and conflict are discussed in the literature, including: (1) whether gender inequality impacts on outbreaks of conflict and vice versa; (2) whether patriarchal norms, identities and empowerment impact on outbreaks of conflict and vice versa; (3) whether political empowerment impacts on outbreaks of conflict and vice versa; (4) whether economic empowerment impacts on outbreaks of conflict and vice versa; (5) whether social empowerment impacts on outbreaks of conflict and vice versa. There is a small body of literature on each point that generally suggests correlation, rather than causation.

The majority of this literature has been produced by the same small group of academics over the past 15 years. Where there is evidence it is largely quantitative, with some qualitative analysis. There is a substantial theoretical literature, which this paper does not explore. The quantitative analyses tend to use a very small set of indices and single indicators that are thought to be 'relatively comparable and uncontaminated' (Caprioli, et al., 2009). The literature has been limited by data difficulties: data is fragmented (found in varying sources and languages); in many places, no data is available; there are comparability and standardisation problems; and political agendas may contaminate data (ibid). In recognition of the limited literature base, and data limitations, this core group of academics Caprioli, Hudson, McDermott, Ballif-Spanvill, Emmett and Stearmer (2009) recently set up the comprehensive WomanStats Database.³

Key findings

- A number of studies quantitatively find a strong correlation between levels of gender inequality and conflict (e.g. Caprioli, 2005, etc). They find that gender inequality increases the likelihood that a state will have internal conflict and international disputes. And countries with low human rights standards (including on gender inequality) are more likely to have militarised and violent interstate disputes (during the period 1980 to 2001). Women's equality is considered 'a consistent predictor of both international violence and internal conflict' (Caprioli, Hudson, McDermott, Emmett and Ballif-Spanvill, 2007). However, the nature of the relationship is not clear.

² See the GSDRC Topic Guides on: Voice, Empowerment and Accountability http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/GSDRC_VEA_topic_guide.pdf; Gender - <http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/gender.pdf>; and the forthcoming GSDRC topic Guide on Gender and Conflict.

³ This is the database established by Hudson, et al. (2012). The WomanStats Project database collects data on all countries with a population greater than 200,000 (a total of 174 countries). It codes over 300 variables on gender inequality data that includes laws, statistics, and practices within countries. The information available ranges from data on domestic violence to female landownership to political participation. See - <http://www.womanstats.org/>

- There is substantial evidence that traditional patriarchal gender identities lead to militaristic and violent conflict approaches. Traditional gender identities frame men as protectors and fighters, and women as vulnerable and needing protecting. Women also can be viewed as 'war bounty' or as a target to attack (or preserve) traditional culture. During periods of conflict these identities can be accentuated and politicised.
- Indicators on gender norms which drive conflict might be more useful for early warning (e.g. violent ideas of masculinity).
- In regards to the impact of **political and civic empowerment (or lack of) on conflict**, evidence suggests: the more years a country has had female suffrage for before an international dispute, the more likely it is to resolve the dispute without using military violence; countries with lower levels of women's representation in parliament are more likely to use military violence to settle international disputes and are at higher risk of intrastate armed conflict; plus other findings.
- In regards to the impact of **conflict on political and civic empowerment**, evidence suggests: before and during conflict women often organise solidarity groups; women have been unable to maintain gains made during conflict into political representation; violence against 'political' women is common; plus other findings.
- In regards to the impact of **economic empowerment (or lack of) on outbreaks of conflict**, evidence suggests: countries with higher female participation in the labour force exhibit lower levels of international violence; better gender equality can indirectly increase a country's stability through its impact on country wealth/income (GDP); plus other findings.
- In regards to the impact of **conflict on economic empowerment**, evidence suggests: during conflict and immediately post-conflict, women are likely to experience greater economic participation; effects of conflict on women's economic activity differs by age and life status; plus other findings.
- In regards to the impact of **social empowerment (or lack of) on conflict**, evidence suggests: countries with high levels of national violence against women and girls have been more likely to experience armed conflict; countries with high fertility rates are more likely to use force in international disputes; plus other findings.
- In regards to the impact of **conflict on social empowerment** evidence suggests: conflict increases female-headed households; levels of gender based violence are higher during and after conflict; plus other findings.

2. Gender inequality and outbreaks of conflict⁴

Impact of gender (in)equality on conflict

Synthesising previous research, Caprioli, Hudson, McDermott, Emmett and Ballif-Spanvill (2007) identify that women's equality 'is a consistent predictor of both international violence and internal conflict'. Caprioli and Trumbore's (2006) **human rights 'rogue states'** index ranks countries according to systematic gender and ethnicity discrimination and general state repressiveness. Quantitative analysis of the index finds that human rights rogues are more likely to become involved in **militarised interstate disputes** in

⁴ This section synthesises information from Herbert, S. (2014). Links between gender-based violence and outbreaks of violent conflict. GSDRC Helpdesk report 1169. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham. <http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Helpdesk&id=1169>

general, and violent interstate disputes specifically, than other states during the period 1980–2001. And that the rogue states (about one-third of all states for any given year) collectively account for 60 per cent of all violent conflicts during that period (ibid).

Caprioli and Trumbore (2003) find that human rights rogue states are more likely to be the **aggressors during international disputes**. They found that the higher the level of national gender and ethnic discrimination and state repression, the greater the likelihood that a state will use force first in interstate disputes. Caprioli and Trumbore also found that just as benign norms of equality and peaceful national dispute resolution transfer to the international arena, malignant norms of discrimination and repression transfer to the international arena as well.

Quantitative analysis by Caprioli (2005) finds that **gender inequality** increases the likelihood that a state will have **internal conflict**. The research also found that the higher the level of gender inequality a state has, the greater the likelihood of internal conflict (over the research period of 1960–2001). This conclusion is supported by quantitative analysis by Melander (2005) finding that gender equality is associated with lower levels of armed conflict within a state. And that ‘more equal societies are less likely to go from peace to civil war and more likely to enter peace if a civil war is ongoing, compared with less equal societies’ (ibid).

Implications and nature of the relationship

The above studies argue that addressing gender inequality could contribute to more stable societies. Another implication is that various aspects of gender (in)equality and gender relations in a country could serve as an early warning of the risk of violent conflict. For example, reduction in women’s status, increased discrimination against women and violations of women’s human rights and attacks on women may be direct precursors of further repression and violent conflict (Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez, 2002).

While these studies quantitatively find correlations between levels of gender inequality and conflict, the nature of the relationship is not clear. It is not known whether conflict leads to greater gender inequality, whether gender inequality leads to conflict, whether gender inequality is a proxy for something else that might cause conflict, or whether countries that are prone to one type of violence, are also prone to others. Furthermore, recent studies have reconsidered the evidence on gender inequality and gender based violence (GBV), noting that GBV occurs across countries including in those with high levels of gender equality (e.g. Wiklund, et al. 2010, in UN, 2011).

However, quantitative analysis by Ekvall (2013) testing whether **norms on gender (in)equality and violence** are linked, concludes that ‘while a causal link cannot be proven for any of the five hypotheses [in the paper], the literature indicates that there might be one. The strong and significant relationships found between our norms and values on gender equality and actual levels of gender equality, conflict and general peacefulness show that there is a need to think about prevention of violence and conflict in a new way, not reducing gender equality to “women’s issues” that can be dealt with later when the “hard” issues have been solved’ (Ekvall, 2013).

3. Norms, identities and empowerment

In a literature review, Saferworld (2014) suggests that indicators on gender norms which drive conflict (especially violent ideas of masculinity) might be more useful for early warning than indicators on gender inequality. However, they caution that more research is needed to understand how to measure norms and their relationships to armed conflict (ibid).

Based on empirical research among women's anti-war organisations worldwide, and drawing on feminist literature, Cockburn's (2010) research indicates that patriarchal gender relations are partly responsible for causing and perpetuating **conflict at all levels of society** (Cockburn, 2010). Cockburn (2010) also finds that patriarchal gender relations intersect with economic and ethno-national power relations in perpetuating a tendency towards **armed conflict in societies**.

Social norms and values have a powerful impact on the likelihood of countries having **interstate disputes**. While there is only limited evidence that democracies are more peaceful in general, Caprioli and Trumbore (2006) find strong evidence that human rights rogue states are more violent in general. Countries characterised by gender inequality, hierarchy, discrimination, and violence, have norms of violence that make **internal conflict** more likely (Caprioli, 2005).

In a paper advising on practical **gender indicators**, Schmeidl with Piza-Lopez (2002) suggest that **cultural indicators** in an **early warning system** should include: honour-shame culture; perception of women as property; cultural practices restricting women; and the practice of female genital mutilation.

Women as peacemakers?

Tessler and Warriner (1997) summarise this literature base in a highly cited journal article. They identify a body of theoretical literature linking feminism and globalism, that hypothesises women are more pacific than men in international relations. Most research in this area is based on deductive reasoning, and there is limited empirical evidence. Findings from empirical evidence is mixed – some public opinion studies confirm and others negate the hypothesis. Often the differences found are small. A second body of theoretical literature looks at the relationship between nationalism and feminism. Among other aspects, it examines whether support for gender equality enhances or diminishes nationalist struggles, and/or whether nationalist struggles enhance or diminish feminist goals. Another debate is whether struggles to change existing political relationships bring similar attitudes towards gender (especially if patriarchy is part of the status quo).

Tessler and Warriner (1997) then test the theory with empirical research based on secondary analysis of survey data from Israel, Egypt, Palestine, and Kuwait, finding:

- Women are not more pacific than men in their attitudes toward international conflict;
- People who expressed greater concern for the status of women and gender equality, were also more likely to support diplomacy and compromises (not conflict) as approaches to international disputes. The favouring of this pacifist approach was found equally in women and men;
- There are personal circumstances that influence whether individuals support compromise and gender equality: whether the person is religious; the sex of the person was important in the societies with higher levels of gender inequality; and education was important in the countries more politically developed and cosmopolitan.

Evidence shows that women, as well as men, take up arms and fight, or join armed groups and provide support services. Women, like men, also often vocally support conflict, praising those who take up arms, and ridiculing those who do not (Barth, 2002 in Specht, 2013). For example, women and men pressure men in Uganda to carry out violent cattle raiding, to be able to pay for expensive dowries (Specht, 2013).

Caprioli, et al. (2007) argue that more 'equal societies are less prone to use violence based on societal norms of equality and tolerance rather than making an argument based on nature—that, for example, women are more peaceful'.

Gender identities

Traditional gender identities can be drivers of conflict as men are framed as protectors and fighters, while women are vulnerable and need protecting (El-Bushra & Sahl, 2005). During periods of conflict these identities can be accentuated and politicised. Goldstein (2001, in Schmeidl and Piza-Lopez, 2002) notes that war has influenced gender identities and norms profoundly through history. Anderlini (2006 in Saferworld, 2014) finds that violent hyper masculinity can be indicative of tensions leading to conflict.

States may draw on masculine identities of protection and physical strength, to ensure male soldiers are recruited that will fight. If men do not demonstrate these traits of bravery, strength and domination, they can be outcasts in society (Schmeidl & Piza-Lopez, 2002). Meanwhile, cultures that limit women's access to resources, and characterise women as inferior to men, foster attitudes of women as property, with norms of household violence, and state repression and violent conflict in the public domain (ibid).

Wright (2014) identifies that violence is associated with men and boys in most cultures differently to women and girls. These unequal and socially constructed identities can play a role in driving conflict and insecurity, with varying impacts:

- 'In South Sudan and Somalia, militarised notions of masculinity which valorise domination and violence have motivated men to participate in violence and women to support them or pressure them to do so' (Wright, 2014);
- 'In Kosovo, political and military actors have valorised violent masculinities in order to recruit combatants and build support for war' (Wright, 2014);
- 'In Uganda, studies have documented the use of violence to attain other symbols of manhood, such as wealth or access to women' (Wright, 2014);
- 'Accounts from Colombia and Uganda suggest that when men feel unable to live up to societal expectations of masculinity, they may be more susceptible to recruitment into armed groups as well as more likely to commit violence in the home' (Wright, 2014);
- Cockburn (2010) finds patriarchal gender relations intersect with economic and ethno-national power relations in perpetuating a tendency towards armed conflict in societies;
- Violent cattle raids in South Sudan are a tradition and rite of passage for men when cattle are exchanged for girls and women – however the raids also perpetuate conflict between communities, and exacerbate violent abductions and revenge attacks (Saferworld & Conciliation Resources, 2014);
- Women can be viewed as 'war bounty' or as ways to attack (or preserve) traditional culture (e.g. Warriner & Tessler, 1997).

- A book summarising a research project in Sudan, Uganda, Angola, Mali, and Somalia (from 2000 to 2001) suggests gender identities contributed to motivations leading to war, and perpetuated violence once started (El-Bushra & Sahl, 2005).

Cockburn (2010) finds that women anti-war activists generally also called themselves feminist (with few exceptions). Many of the women anti-war activists see gender relations as causal in war. While wars are not fought 'for' gender issues (e.g. land), patriarchal gender relations are among the root causes of militarism and war (ibid). Traditional gender identities of masculinity (strong, authoritative, coercive, violent) and femininity (weak, vulnerable, needing protection) seek and need militarisation and war to be fulfilled (ibid).

4. Political and civic empowerment⁵

Impact of political and civic empowerment (or lack of) on conflict

Through quantitative analysis, Caprioli (2000) finds that the more **years a country has had female suffrage** for before an **international dispute**, the more likely it is to resolve the dispute without using military violence. Also, if a state has twice the number of years of female suffrage, it will be nearly five times as likely to resolve the international dispute without using military violence (ibid). Years of suffrage is used as an indicator as the longer women have been able to vote, the more chance women have had to influence politics.

Caprioli (2000) also finds that countries with lower **levels of women's representation in parliament** are more likely to use **military violence to settle international disputes**. A 5 per cent decrease in the percentage of women in parliament makes a country nearly five times as likely to resolve the international disputes using military violence (ibid). Percentage of women in parliament is used as an indicator as this institution has generally a greater impact on foreign policy than other formal political institutions.

In a 2001 paper, Caprioli and Boyer quantitatively analyse gender inequality and conflict, also using the same indicators: **percentage of women in the legislature** and **duration of women's suffrage**. They find: the **severity of violence** used in a crisis decreases as national gender equality increases.

Quantitative analysis by Melander (2005) finds the higher the rate of female **representation in parliament**, the lower a country's **level of intrastate armed conflict** will be. The data tests the proposition that a critical mass of one-third of women is needed, and rejects this, finding that even with less than one-third, women still impact on the level of intrastate armed conflict. It also finds that the more democratic the country is, the stronger the pacifying effect of female representation in parliament will be. On this final point, it cannot clarify whether it is female parliamentary representation that strengthens the pacifying effect of democracy, or if it is the level of institutional democracy that reinforces the pacifying impact of female parliamentary representation.

Melander's (2005) analysis rejects one of the hypotheses tested, finding that **countries with a woman leader do not have** lower levels of internal armed conflict than countries with a man as its highest leader.

Quantitative analysis by Ekvall (2013) using the new WomanStats Project database tested hypotheses on whether **norms on gender (in)equality and violence** are linked. The summary article reports strong and

⁵ This section draws on the forthcoming GSDRC topic Guide on Gender and Conflict.

positive results that confirm: the higher the level of political and socio-economic gender equality in a country, the less likely it is that it will experience an **intrastate armed conflict**. And the higher the level of political and socio-economic gender equality in a country, the **more peaceful the country is in general**.⁶

Ekvall (2013) also examines norms on whether **people approve of gender equality**. The summary article reports strong and positive results that: the greater the numbers of people approving of gender equality in a country, the less likely it is that there will be an **armed conflict**, the more **peaceful it will be in general**, and the higher the level of political and socio-economic **equality**.

Gender inequality can prompt women to join armed groups and **fight for freedom and empowerment**. In Eritrea women were actively encouraged to fight for their freedom and join the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (Specht, 2013). In Liberia girls reported that they became armed combatants for reasons including 'protecting themselves, revenging against their enemies but also to prove they were equal to men' (ibid, p.69).

In a paper advising on practical **gender indicators**, Schmeidl with Piza-Lopez (2002) suggest that **political indicators** in an **early warning system** should include: percentage of women in parliament; female suffrage (year); Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM); and whether the country is a signatory to UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Impact of conflict on political and civic empowerment

Both **pre-emptively and during conflict**, women often organise in **solidarity groups** and networks to oppose militarism and militarisation, to prevent wars or bring wars to an end, to achieve justice and sustainable peace, or to protect women to carry out basic tasks (e.g. the Liberian Women in Peacebuilding Network, and Argentina's Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo) (Cockburn, 2010; Specht, 2013).

Historically, and in most but not all cases, women have been unable to maintain and formalise gains made during conflict into **post-conflict political representation** (Hughes, 2009). Specht (2013, p.72) notes that post-conflict, women often remain at the 'margins of political, economic and social power; their voices and experiences often diminish when the peace processes start'. In a review of 31 major **peace processes** (1992-2011), women only made up 4 per cent of signatories, 2.4 per cent of chief mediators, 3.7 per cent of witnesses, and 9 per cent of negotiators (UN Women, 2012 in OECD, 2013).

Hughes (2009) finds that longer, larger-scale wars that contest the political system and/or change the government's composition have led to the best outcomes for women to gain **parliamentary seats** (during 1980s to 1990s in low-income countries). E.g. evidence from Rwanda, Mozambique, Uganda, and Tajikistan suggests that structural and cultural mechanisms combined with political openings have led to post-conflict gains in women's political representation (Hughes, 2009). A third of the countries that have 30 per cent or more women in parliament experienced recent conflict, fragility or a transition to democracy (UN Security Council, 2012 in OECD, 2013).

However, **violence against 'political' women** is common in FCAS and dissuades women from participating in public life (True, 2013). Women human rights defenders may be vulnerable to abuse and exploitation as a result of the presence of international actors and peacekeeping troops (APWLD, 2007). Extremists can also gain power in conflict situations and violate human rights where traditional, religious and customary

⁶ Notably the paper available online is a summary paper, and it does not define the indicators use to determine the peacefulness of a country in general.

norms are rigidly imposed (ibid). In post-conflict situations, the dangers facing women human rights defenders can actually increase during periods of impunity when the rule of law is interrupted (ibid).

5. Economic empowerment⁷

Impact of economic empowerment (or lack of) on outbreaks of conflict

Quantitative analysis by Caprioli (2000) finds that countries with higher **female participation in the labour force** exhibit lower levels of **international violence**. And, if the proportion of women in the labour force increases by 5 per cent, a state is nearly five times less likely to use military force to resolve international conflict. The high statistical significance of the findings leads Caprioli (2000) to note that it 'seems to indicate that participation in the workforce alone is sufficient to empower women'. However, the paper recognises that labour force participation presumably results in other types of political participation (e.g. voting, activism). Caprioli (2005) also finds that countries with 10 per cent of women in the labour force are nearly 30 times more likely to experience **internal conflict** than are countries with 40 per cent of women in the labour force.

Caprioli, et al. (2007) identify that gender equality can indirectly increase a country's stability through its impact on **country wealth/income (GDP)**. As it is well established that bad economic conditions are a catalyst for war. And it is also well established that increased gender equality increases a country's GDP.

In a paper advising on practical **gender indicators**, Schmeidl with Piza-Lopez (2002) suggest that **economic indicators** in an **early warning system** should include: percentage of women in the labour force; and percentage of women in work sectors (agriculture, industry, service).

Impact of conflict on economic empowerment

A literature review by Domingo et al. (2013) notes that **during conflict and immediately post-conflict**, women are likely to experience **greater economic participation**. Empirical research in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Kosovo, Nepal, Tajikistan and Timor Leste found (Justino, 2012): women participate more actively in labour markets during conflict and increases in the labour participation of women in conflict-affected areas are in some cases associated with increases in overall household and community welfare.

In the longer-term post conflict, there is mixed evidence as to what happens to women's empowerment and there is a paucity of longitudinal research. In all contexts, the economic opportunities open to women are shaped foremost by culture and tradition, education, and access to land and resources (O-Connell, 2011 in Strachan forthcoming). There may be a backlash against women's changing roles.

The effects of conflict on women's economic **activity differs by age and life status**. Based on analysis of large-scale household survey data, Schindler (2011) found that in **post-conflict** Rwanda, little changed for married women, as post-war they reverted back to (or continued) with domestic tasks in the household and subsistence farming. Young unmarried women post-war conformed more closely with traditional expectations than other women (partly due to more competition to find a husband in a smaller pool of eligible men). While widows engaged more intensively in income-generating activities than other women.

⁷ This section draws on the forthcoming GSDRC topic Guide on Gender and Conflict.

Women combatants, like men, are likely to be unemployed immediately post-conflict. Often disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration activities favour men over women, and do not cater for specific needs women may face (e.g. reintegration in Sierra Leone and Eritrea largely overlooked women. Bouta et al. 2005 in Anderlini, 2006).

6. Social empowerment

Social empowerment is understood as the process of developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence, and acting individually and collectively to change social relationships and the institutions and discourses that exclude poor people and keep them in poverty.⁸

Impact of social empowerment (or lack of) on conflict

Emerging research has found that countries with high levels of national **violence against women and girls** (e.g. domestic violence, female infanticide and sex-selective abortion) have been more likely to experience armed conflict than those without (Hudson, et al., 2009). This study argues that the physical security of women is one of the most important factors for predicting the peacefulness of societies (compared to more commonly used indicators of democracy, GDP per capita and prevalence of Islam). However, it also recognises it as complex, not fully understood, and likely to be correlation as a causal relationship cannot be proven.⁹

Through quantitative analysis Caprioli (2000) finds that countries with high **fertility rates** (a proxy for women's low social status and empowerment) are more likely to use force in **international disputes**. And decreasing the fertility rate by a third makes a country nearly five times less likely to use a military solution to settle international disputes (ibid). Caprioli (2005) also finds that countries with high fertility rates (3.01 and higher) are nearly twice as likely to experience **internal conflict** than countries with low fertility rates (3 and below).

Caprioli (2000) identifies that fertility rate is a useful indicator of women's social equality and empowerment as women's lives are often described in terms of motherhood (but especially in societies where women have low social status) and as women who cannot control fertility are less likely to work, among other factors. In general, 'lower fertility rates result in women's empowerment in that they have greater control over their own lives and more free time' (UNDP, 1995 in Caprioli, 2000).

Quantitative analysis by Melander (2010) found strong statistical significance that the higher the **female-to-male higher education attainment** ratio, the lower a state's level of intrastate armed conflict will be.

Hudson and Den Boer (2004 in Caprioli, 2007) find that countries with exaggerated gender inequality – defined as highly **abnormal sex ratios in favour of males** – experience higher **societal instability** and diminished prospects for both peace and democracy.

⁸ See the GSDRC Topic Guides on Voice, Empowerment and Accountability
http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/GSDRC_VEA_topic_guide.pdf.

⁹ This section summarises the findings in - Herbert, S. (2014). *Links between gender-based violence and outbreaks of violent conflict*. GSDRC Helpdesk report 1169. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.
<http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Helpdesk&id=1169>

In a paper advising on practical **gender indicators**, Schmeidl with Piza-Lopez (2002) suggest that **societal/socio-demographic indicators** in an **early warning system** should include: female fertility rate; maternal mortality rate; gender ratio at birth (preference for boys); infant (and child mortality) of girls; female literacy rate; average level of female education; average number of children per household; and contraceptive use by women.

Impact of conflict on social empowerment

Conflict can dramatically change family and community dynamics as more men than women tend to join groups to fight, while women may also join groups to fight, or may take on previously male roles within or outside the household (Specht, 2013).

More men than women are absent during and following war, leading to an increase in **female-headed households** (Anderlini, 2006). As more men fight, they are most likely to be killed during war. They also might go into hiding or be separated from their families (ibid). In a post-conflict context, as some men return the number of female-headed households reduces. Post-conflict, households often increase in size (e.g. taking on orphaned children) which can increase economic and social responsibilities for women. Afghanistan's protracted conflict has led to 35,000 female-headed households. In Uganda, the conflict led to women headed households who were in charge of family survival - increasing women's mobility and public presence. The shift in gender roles continued post-war (Specht, 2013).

Throughout history, and during conflicts in different parts of the world, there have been incidences where **GBV** has exacerbated conflict and led to revenge attacks (Saferworld & Conciliation Resources, 2014). Levels of GBV are higher during and after armed conflict. Sexual violence can be a deliberate war tactic. GBV often does not subside post-conflict. It affects both men and women in different ways. Sexual and GBV remains the most widespread and serious protection problems facing displaced and returnee women and girls.

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