



FIGIJ Advocacy Statement on Violence Against Women and Girls in Conflict, Humanitarian Settings, and War Situations

Endorsed by NASPAG

Introduction

The International Federation of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology (FIGIJ) recognizes the profound impact of conflict, humanitarian crises, and war on the health and well-being of women and girls. These settings exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls to various forms of gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual violence, exploitation, and abuse.

FIGIJ stands in solidarity with global efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls in these contexts and calls for comprehensive coordinated actions based on international standards and human rights principles.

Context and Rationale

Violence against women and adolescent girls is a pervasive violation of human rights, rooted in gender-based discrimination and systemic inequalities. It encompasses a range of harmful acts, including physical, sexual, and mental abuse, coercion, and threats, often resulting in severe physical and psychological consequences for survivors. Women and girls face high rates of sexual violence globally, with an especially grim reality in conflict zones, where over 94% of verified cases involve female victims (WHO, 2024; UN, 2023). Sexual violence in these contexts often includes extreme forms such as gang rape and genital assault, used deliberately as a weapon of war to terrorize and destabilize communities. This violence carries lifelong impacts on mental health, reproductive health, and social well-being, increasing risks of sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancies, and higher mortality rates for survivors (ML Larsen, 2016).

Adolescent girls are uniquely vulnerable to GBV. In conflict and humanitarian crisis settings, girls face heightened risks of sexual exploitation, forced marriage, and trafficking (UNICEF, 2019). These crises erode community structures that typically offer protection, leaving young girls isolated and dependent on exploitative or unsafe relationships. Many girls are denied access to education, forced into early marriages, or compelled into risky livelihoods due to economic deprivation, further intensifying their vulnerability.

The impacts of GBV extend beyond immediate physical harm; they disrupt the social and economic fabric of communities. Survivors often face stigma, social ostracism, and economic hardship, affecting their reintegration and well-being. Adolescent survivors are particularly affected, often losing educational and personal development opportunities, which

perpetuates cycles of poverty and dependency. Comprehensive responses to GBV must prioritize access to healthcare, protection services, education, and economic support. Effective advocacy for adolescent girls must address these structural issues, empowering them with education, social support, and resources to protect their rights, ensuring a safe environment where they can thrive free from violence.

Recommendations

FIGIJ vehemently condemns gender based violence as a tool of warfare and calls upon Government, legal and humanitarian entities to adequately resource protection of communities, prosecution of perpetrators, and access to reparations by survivors:

Prevention and Protection

1. Strengthen Legal Frameworks:

- Advocate for the enforcement of international humanitarian and human rights laws that protect women and girls from violence. This includes the ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- Community-Based Prevention: Support community-led initiatives that address the root causes of violence, promote gender equality, and empower women and girls. This includes educational programs and awareness campaigns. Support international arbitration initiatives to prevent conflict, international or domestic, political or of other nature, where women and children are highly impacted / governments to counteract the links between gender based violence and militarization

2. Healthcare and Psychosocial Support

- Integrated Health Services: Establishment of hot-line service with anonymous access, for reporting sexual violence. Such service might be local, regional or global with multilinguistic services. Ensure access to comprehensive survivor centered healthcare services for survivors of violence, including sexual and reproductive health services, mental health support, and psychosocial care. The WHO's clinical guidelines on responding to sexual violence should be a standard reference (WHO, 2013).
- Capacity Building: Train healthcare providers and humanitarian workers as well as emergency room staff to recognize, prevent, and respond to violence against women and girls in conflict and humanitarian settings.

3. Coordination and Collaboration

- Inter-Agency Coordination: Strengthen coordination among humanitarian agencies, governments, and local organizations to provide a cohesive response to violence against

women and girls. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines on gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian settings should be implemented (IASC, 2015).

- Partnerships: Foster partnerships with international bodies, such as UN Women, WHO, ICRC and UNICEF, to leverage resources, expertise, and advocacy efforts.

4. Data Collection and Research

- Improved Data Collection: Support the systematic collection and analysis of data on violence against women and girls in conflict and humanitarian settings to inform policy and programmatic responses. This includes adherence to ethical standards to ensure the safety and confidentiality of survivors.
- Research and Evaluation: Promote research on the effectiveness of interventions aimed at preventing and responding to violence in these settings, with a focus on evidence-based practices. The culture of silence, under- and delayed reporting, poor follow-up pose significant barriers. Alternative methods should be considered as traditional conservative research methods might not be available.
- Funding: Governments and international NGOs should prioritize adequate levels of funding of studies and data dissemination.

Conclusion

The International Federation of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology (FIGIJ) is committed to advocating for the rights and well-being of women and girls affected by conflict, humanitarian crises, and war. By adopting comprehensive strategies that encompass prevention, protection, healthcare, coordination, and research, we can mitigate the impact of violence and support the resilience and recovery of affected women and girls. FIGIJ calls on all stakeholders to take urgent and sustained action to address this critical issue.

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This policy statement reaffirms our dedication to ending violence against women and girls and to promoting their health, safety, and rights in all circumstances

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