



GENDERED IMPACTS OF THE USE OF EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS

Explosive weapons refer to conventional weapons that are activated by detonation of a high-explosive substance creating blast and fragmentation. They include artillery shells, missile and rocket warheads, mortars, aircraft bombs and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), among others.



When used in populated areas such as cities, towns and villages, explosive weapons can cause grave humanitarian harm.



In addition to direct effects, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA) can cause indirect effects, which spread out over space and time, putting individuals and communities at risk.



The impacts of the use of EWIPA vary among women, men, girls and boys.

WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

EXAMPLES OF GENDERED DIRECT IMPACTS OF THE USE OF EWIPA

Men comprise most of direct casualties of explosive weapons attacks among civilians and face a higher risk of death and injury due to their movement patterns and gender roles.

Pregnant **women** are put at additional risk by blast waves which leads to pregnancy-related complications and miscarriages.

The use of explosive weapons often results in explosive remnants of war and **children** account for roughly half of the casualties from explosive ordnance around the world.

Attacks by explosive weapons in residential areas and markets can disproportionately affect **women** in contexts where they have the primary responsibility for buying food and household goods at markets.

Following explosive weapons attacks, **children** have a disproportionate requirement for health services – both surgical and otherwise – and experience injuries of a greater intensity than adults.

Children are more likely to die from a blast injury than adults.

EXAMPLES OF GENDERED INDIRECT IMPACTS OF THE USE OF EWIPA

Physical trauma resulting in disabilities have differentiated impacts on women, men, girls and boys. **Women** with disabilities are often seen as a burden on their families and girls with disabilities are less likely to attend school. **Men** with disabilities can face economic discrimination as well as the loss of their social status.

The **indirect effects** of life-altering injury ripple out across families and communities, increasing the number of women headed households and leading **women and girls** to take on additional unpaid caregiving roles.

Destruction of schools can exacerbate gender inequalities and expose **girls and boys** to various risks, such as early marriages and recruitment into armed groups.

Destruction of hospitals and disruption in health services increases **maternal mortality**.

Destruction of housing and other infrastructure often leads to the establishment of informal settlements and forced migration, exposing **women and girls** to higher risks of sexual abuse and gender-based violence.

When schools reopen, **girls** are less likely than boys to return due to security perceptions and gender norms.

In the aftermath of conflict, gender roles can shape **distinct experiences** of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and social stigma among **women, men, girls and boys**.

THE EWIPA POLITICAL DECLARATION

Since 2022, 85 States have adopted [The Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas](#).

Through this Declaration, States commit to:

- Restricting or refraining as appropriate from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, when their use may be expected to cause harm to civilians or civilian objects.
- Take into account the direct and indirect effects on civilians and civilian objects which can reasonably be foreseen in the planning of military operations.

These provisions are important because knowledge about the different risks and vulnerabilities faced by women, men, girls and boys can inform military operations, enhance the protection of civilians in armed conflict and support humanitarian response.

The Declaration recognizes the gendered impacts of EWIPA and its operative section requests States:

- Collect, share, and make publicly available disaggregated data on the direct and indirect effects on civilians and civilian objects of military operations.
- Adopt a holistic, integrated, gender-sensitive, and non-discriminatory approach to victim assistance.

ADDITIONAL AREAS FOR ACTION

ENDORISING STATES

SUPPORT and fund the work of the UN, ICRC and non-governmental organizations in collecting gender disaggregated data and researching gendered impacts on the direct and indirect effects of the use of EWIPA.



APPLY a gender perspective in the implementation of existing obligations under International Humanitarian Law with regards to the use of explosive weapons.



INTEGRATE gender and age disaggregated data on the direct and indirect impacts of the use of EWIPA into the planning of military operations, to enhance understanding of the operational environment and help avoid civilian harm.



APPOINT trained Gender Advisors in appropriate positions of influence in militaries to provide advice and analysis for commanders and planning teams.



CONSULT relevant governmental entities and/or local women's organizations to gain a better understanding of gender-specific risks and needs in pre-deployment training and operational planning.



ALL STATES AND STAKEHOLDERS

SHARE best practices for integrating gender considerations into policies and practices to help avoid civilian harm.



SUPPORT and fund research on the indirect effects of EWIPA, including its impact on sustainable development and gender equality.



ACKNOWLEDGE the gendered impacts of the use of EWIPA in statements, resolutions, and declarations at multilateral meetings.



INCLUDE survivors and their representative organizations, as well as first responders and development actors, in international discussions in EWIPA related meetings.



EXPLORE synergies between the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the Declaration, in order to ensure women's participation in efforts to protect civilians in armed conflict.



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