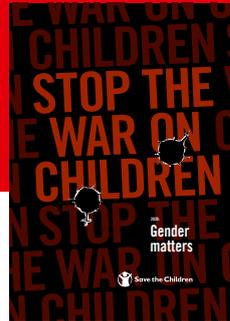




EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Stop the War on Children 2020: Gender Matters is the third report in the series from Save the Children.

“When ISIS took over our town, the fighting got worse. I feel so much older than I am because of the war. I feel like an old woman even though I am 16.”

Safaa, 16, Syria

The war on children

This is the third report in Save the Children's 'Stop the War on Children' series. It reveals shocking trends in the threats to the safety and wellbeing of children living in areas impacted by conflict. In 2018, verified grave violations against children reached a record high.

415 million children worldwide are living in a conflict zone, including 149 million children living in high-intensity conflict zones where more than 1,000 battle-related deaths occur in a year.

Overall, the number of children living in conflict zones is highest in Africa, with 170 million in total. Proportionately, the Middle East has the highest share with almost 1 out of 3 children in the region living in conflict zones.

Conflict is becoming increasingly dangerous for children. Since 2010, the number of children living in conflict zones has increased by 34%. At the same time, the number of verified incidents of grave violations against children have risen by 170%.

While there is no doubt that children engage in a variety of activities in humanitarian response design as well as in building and sustaining peace, their voices are not sufficiently heard and their potential remains both under-recognised and underfunded.

Girls, boys and conflict

Alongside these overall numbers, this latest report starts to delve into the differences between boys' and girls' experiences of conflict through a gendered analysis of verified grave violations. This highlights that:

Girls are at far higher risk of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, including child, early and forced marriage. Boys are much more likely to be exposed to killing and maiming, abductions and recruitment.

Gendered understandings of conflict combined with persistent gender roles result in a focus on public-sphere violations that are more often experienced by boys, and that are easier to identify and verify than private-sphere violations. By contrast, violations in spaces that girls are more likely to occupy are often unseen or ignored by others, rendering experiences of sexual violence and violations against girls and children of diverse gender identities under-reported and invisible.

Challenges in monitoring, reporting and verifying violations – due to limited access to affected areas, security concerns and sensitivity associated with violations – mean that the true scale of violations affecting children is under-reported. The influence of gender on certain violations, such as sexual violence against boys or the recruitment and use of girls, can result in even lower rates of reporting.

There are particular challenges in understanding and responding to rights violations experienced by children of diverse gender identities. Reporting mechanisms, when they are disaggregated at all, continue to rely on binary data representations of gender. As a result, the experiences of children of all genders and the full impact of violations against them are unknown.



“I can still remember everything. That’s why I’m still upset,” says eight-year-old Diana. When her family home was bombed, her parents sold what was left and escaped. The flight was long and dangerous. At times the family was split up and living on the street. She is now in a camp in Dohuk in Iraq.

PHOTO: AYTUNC AKAD / PANOS / SAVE THE CHILDREN

ACT NOW

The facts and stories presented in this report paint an unacceptable reality. We urge the international community, states, armed groups and all other key stakeholders to step up their efforts to effectively protect children in conflict. As set out in our previous ‘Stop the War on Children’ reports, we believe states must take action in three areas:

- uphold international norms and standards
- hold perpetrators of violations against children to account
- enable children to recover from conflict and take practical action to protect them from harm

Additionally, in order to recognise and respond to the specific needs of boys, girls and children of diverse gender identities and of different ages, states and humanitarian actors must ensure their responses to protect children in conflict are sensitive to differences between ages and genders. We call on states and humanitarian actors to:

- Support the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict financially and diplomatically to ensure that data collection through the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism is sex-disaggregated whenever

possible, and support the office’s work with parties to conflict so that action plans specifically address the ways in which all the six grave violations affects the genders. In addition, states and the humanitarian actors must develop, resource and implement strategies that specifically identify and address the wider impact of conflict on girls, boys and children of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities. This should go beyond the six grave violations to include other violations of children’s rights in conflict, such as those in the private sphere where girls are more likely to be impacted.

- Increase multi-year investment in humanitarian child protection with the aim of growing its proportion of total humanitarian funding from 0.5% to 4%, including substantially increasing funding for both mainstreamed and targeted interventions on gender equality, girls’ empowerment, and sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian settings.
- Ensure meaningful participation for children in responses and programmes, and when possible always disaggregate target beneficiaries by age, sex, and disability, and tailor responses accordingly.

Get the full report at [stopwaronchildren.org](https://www.stopwaronchildren.org)