

Gendered Impacts 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 that have wide-area effects can cause grave humanitarian harm.



In addition to immediate direct effects, explosive weapons cause reverberating effects, which spread out over space and time, putting individuals and communities at risk.



The impacts of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA) vary among women, men, girls and boys.

What is the Evidence?

- DIRECT IMPACTS -

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.

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.

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

Men face a higher risk of death and injury, comprising most direct casualties of explosive weapons attacks among civilians.

Pregnant **women** face a higher risk of pregnancy-related complications, including miscarriages.

- REVERBERATING IMPACTS -

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 **reverberating effects** of life-altering injury ripple out across families and communities, including leading **women and girls** to take on additional caregiving roles and become the family's main provider.

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**.

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**.

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



Why it Matters

- ✓ Sex and gender are important factors to understand the humanitarian consequences of explosive weapons, but they remain largely absent from research and data collection efforts.
- ✓ Knowledge about the different risks and vulnerabilities faced by women, men, girls and boys can inform prevention and protection strategies, as well as response and recovery efforts including assistance to survivors.
- ✓ Addressing the gendered implications of the direct and reverberating effects of EWIPA will enable more sustainable relief and recovery efforts, ultimately enhancing the security and well-being of states and people.
- ✓ Protecting civilians from direct and reverberating gendered effects of EWIPA will strengthen the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality.

Areas for Action



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



INCLUDE survivors and their representative organizations, as well as first responders and development actors, in international discussions on explosive weapons.



INTEGRATE the topic of EWIPA into the Women, Peace and Security debates in order to guarantee women's participation in efforts to protect civilians.



DEVELOP AND FUND mechanisms to collect and share sex- and gender-disaggregated data on the direct and indirect effects of EWIPA.



PROVIDE gender-sensitive assistance to survivors, including in the form of trauma care, physical rehabilitation, psychosocial support and socioeconomic reintegration.



APPLY a gender perspective in the implementation of existing obligations under International Humanitarian Law with regards to the use of EWIPA and develop and share best practices for integrating gender in the **civilian protection life cycle**.



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

Learn More

UNIDIR's Gender and Disarmament Programme seeks to contribute to the strategic goals of achieving gender equality in disarmament forums and effectively applying gender perspectives in disarmament processes. It encompasses original research, outreach activities and resource tools to support disarmament stakeholders in translating gender awareness into practical action.

To learn more, visit www.unidir.org/gender