

# Gender dynamics in internal displacement



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displacement  
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## Acknowledgements

This report was produced with the generous financial support of Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).



It would not have been possible without the contributions and review of IDMC staff and consultants: Clementine Andre, Vicente Anzellini, Christelle Cazabat, Julia Durand, Ricardo Fal-Dutra and Youssef Jai. The online survey in Ukraine was conducted by RIWI and benefited from the inputs of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Ukraine. The research in Colombia was made possible thanks to the support of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)'s team in Colombia (Elisandry Navarro, Nayibe Perez Paiva and Johnatan Sanchez Moreno) and Ana Toro Herrera.

The authors would also like to thank colleagues from the following organisations for their contributions: the Authentic Memorial Empowerment Foundation, the Daraja Reube Mbororo Development Association, Reach Out, the South West/North West Women's Task Force, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and NRC's team in Cameroon; the German Agency for International Cooperation or (GIZ) in Colombia, Buscafuturo, Plataforma EICOS Meta, Red de Mujeres Desplazadas del Meta, UN Women in Colombia, the Unit for the Attention and Integral Reparation to the Victims of Colombia (UARIV), the women's secretary of the Villavicencio mayor's office, and the National Emergency Management Office in Tonga.

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Cover photo: Thirteen-year-old students sitting on boxes of disaster relief supplies distributed in Vanua Levu, Fiji, after Tropical Cyclone Yasa made landfall in the country in 2020. © UNICEF/UN0396372/Stephen/Infinity Images

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Children playing in a displacement camp in the Centre-Nord region of Burkina Faso. © UNOCHA/Michele Cattani

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Children accompany women from the Gumuz Returnee Village in the Benishangul Gumuz Region of Ethiopia as they carry wood and other rations from a nearby forest. © UNOCHA Ethiopia/Liz Loh-Taylor



1

**Around 35.8 million women and girls were living in internal displacement as a result of conflict, violence and disasters at the end of 2022.**

2

**Internal displacement amplifies pre-existing gender inequalities and exposes people of all genders and sexual orientations to specific and intersecting risks.**

3

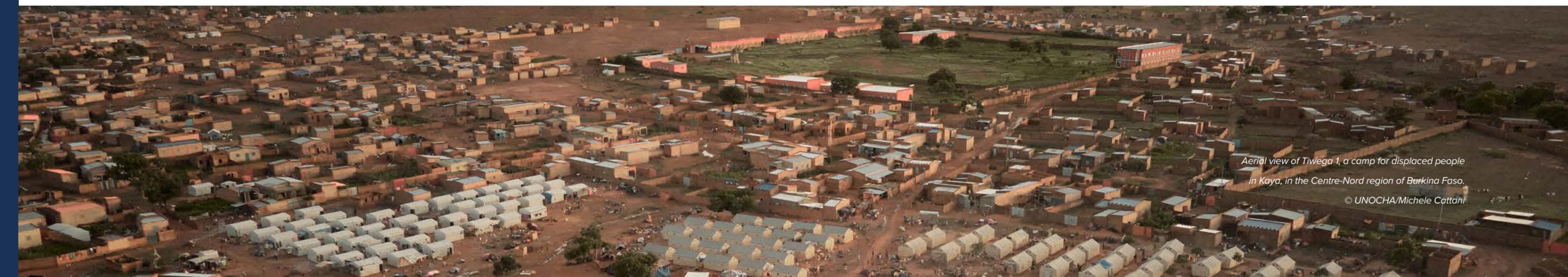
**Despite promising signs of progress, gender-responsive approaches to data collection and programming on displacement remain insufficient. Most data available on internally displaced people (IDPs) is not disaggregated by sex. Further breakdown by gender identity and sexual orientation is even harder to come by.**

4

**Government, humanitarian and development stakeholders must have access to robust quantitative and qualitative data on the needs, capacities and agency of IDPs of different genders to advance more inclusive and tailored programming.**

5

**Ensuring the meaningful participation of IDPs of different genders in decision making on displacement and enhancing their roles as agents of change is essential to guarantee the effectiveness of interventions.**



*Aerial view of Tiwega 1, a camp for displaced people in Kaya, in the Centre-Nord region of Burkina Faso.*

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# Introduction

A person's gender inevitably shapes their experience of internal displacement.<sup>1</sup> It intersects with their age, ethnicity, disability, and other characteristics to affect the risks they face during displacement and their ability to access appropriate support. The conditions necessary to maintain life, livelihood, and dignity, as well as achieve lasting solutions to displacement vary for women, men, girls and boys, including people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity/ expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

There are growing calls to incorporate a gender perspective into humanitarian and development action on displacement.<sup>2</sup> Despite promising signs of progress, however, approaches to data collection and programming remain insufficient. Most data available on internally displaced people (IDPs) is not disaggregated by sex. Further breakdown by gender identity and sexual orientation is even harder to come by.

The gaps in disaggregated data contribute to blanket approaches to programming that tend to treat IDPs as a single homogenous group who experience displacement in the same way. Where gender differences are recognised, displaced women, girls and IDPs who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other diverse groups (LGBTIQ+) are often categorised together under the umbrella term of "vulnerable groups", overlooking their leadership, agency, and capacities.

This report is intended to improve understanding of gender inequalities linked with internal displacement and highlight ways forward to promote more inclusive and effective data collection, planning and responses. It begins by drawing from the latest primary data collected by IDMC and other organisations to explore the gendered risks and impacts of displacement.

It then showcases promising examples of gender-responsive action to prevent and address the phenomenon, and highlights women's role as agents of change. The final section takes stock of data sources on the issue and discusses tools and initiatives to address gaps.



*A woman of the Embera Katío indigenous community processing maize in her village near the Pacific coast in Colombia. The conditions necessary to achieve lasting solutions to displacement vary based on an individual's gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, and sex characteristics. © NRC/Elegante Lab*

# Gender-specific risks and challenges

Internal displacement affects people's livelihoods, security, health, education and housing in different ways depending on their gender. The term "sex" usually refers to the classification of a person as having female, male or intersex biological characteristics, while "gender" denotes the socially constructed characteristics, roles, expectations, behaviours and activities that society attributes to women, men, girls and boys.<sup>3</sup> Understanding the gendered impacts of displacement and how they influence IDPs' agency and progress towards achieving durable solutions is the first step in designing inclusive and effective responses.

## Livelihoods

Displacement heightens the economic, legal, political and social barriers women and girls face and deepens gender inequalities in terms of land rights, job opportunities and income levels.<sup>4</sup> Women frequently bear the burden of caregiving in displacement settings, which is increased by disruption to their family's access to healthcare and education.<sup>5</sup> In some cases, displacement has a positive

impact on women's economic agency because of a shift in social norms or through financial necessity.<sup>6</sup> Most often, however, discrimination and entrenched gender norms constrain displaced women's capacity to seek out new livelihood opportunities.

These dynamics were highlighted in surveys we conducted among IDPs living in displacement sites in Bogo and Loug-gol, Cameroon, as well as among non-displaced residents in the surrounding areas.<sup>7</sup> The proportion of displaced women earning money from work was lower than that of displaced men and non-displaced women (see figure 1). Illiteracy is a major obstacle to IDPs' employment, particularly for displaced women in the sites. Only 14 per cent of the displaced women surveyed had received some form of education, compared with 26 per cent of men. Among those IDPs who found work, men reported a median monthly income of 30,000 CFA francs, while women reported 10,000 CFA francs. Education rates and median incomes were higher among the non-displaced men and women surveyed.

Displaced women with a disability tend to face greater obstacles to finding work. A nationwide survey in Syria found that 15 per cent of displaced women with a disability had engaged in work in the last three months, compared with 20 per cent of those without a disability.<sup>8</sup>

## Security

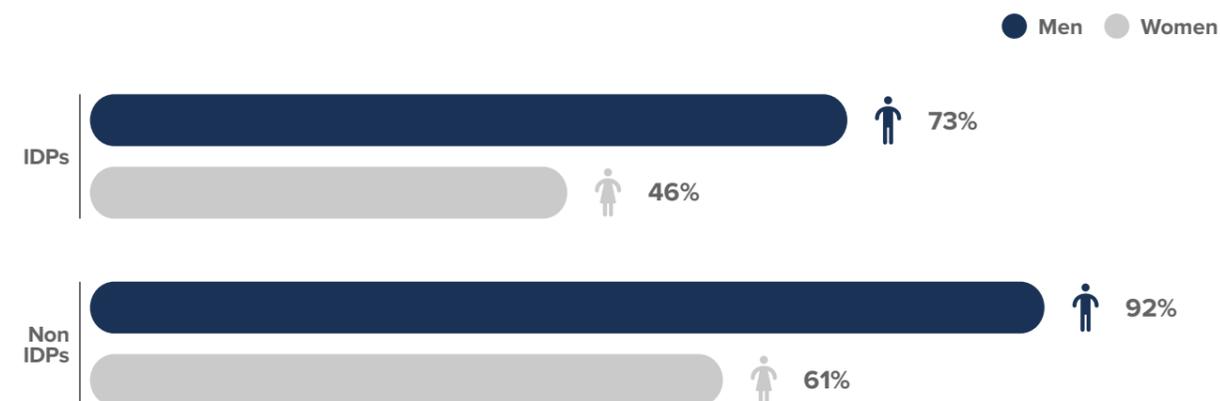
Evidence from Ethiopia, Pakistan and Uganda shows that the frequency of gender-based violence (GBV) increases during displacement as a result of the social and physical conditions of displacement camps and evacuation centres.<sup>9</sup> The risk of GBV increases as displaced women face disruption to their education, social networks and access to social protection and justice mechanisms.<sup>10</sup> Displaced girls are often pushed into early marriage out of financial necessity or as protection against sexual harassment.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to external threats, the stress and trauma of displacement and men's loss of financial autonomy elevate the risk of intimate partner violence. Data from demographic and health surveys in Colombia and Liberia found that displaced women faced 40 and 55 per cent greater odds,

respectively, of experiencing intimate partner violence in the last year compared with non-displaced women.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, cultural norms and gender discrimination can prevent women from fleeing during crises and lead to forced immobility. Restrictive notions of "honour" impeded some from seeking safety and aid following flooding in Pakistan, putting their lives at risk.<sup>13</sup>

Despite receiving less attention, displaced men and boys also encounter threats to their safety, including GBV, forced labour and recruitment by armed groups.<sup>14</sup> LGBTIQ+ IDPs face heightened risks of discrimination, violence and restrictions on their movement, as has evidenced since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.<sup>15</sup> Some transgender and intersex women, whose gender identity does not match their official identity documents, have been unable to pass internal checkpoints or leave Ukraine due to regulations preventing serviceable men from leaving the country.<sup>16</sup> To better understand the gendered risks of displacement and agency dynamics in Ukraine, IDMC commissioned an online survey of IDPs, returnees and non-displaced people in 2023 (see spotlight 1).

## Survey response: Earning money from work



Survey of 600 respondents commissioned by IDMC in March 2023

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents earning money from work in Bogo and Loug-gol by displacement status and sex

## Spotlight 1: Gendered risks, challenges and agency in Ukraine

As with many aspects of the rapidly evolving conflict in Ukraine, understanding the gendered dynamics of displacement and its impacts is difficult. The amount of evidence on gender dynamics in Ukraine has increased in the past year, but some of it is anecdotal.<sup>17</sup> Quantitative data about the challenges and risks faced by women, men, girls and boys exists, but it is limited and not enough evidence is collected on non-binary and LGBTIQ+ people.<sup>18</sup> To help fill some of these information gaps, IDMC commissioned an online survey of adults in Ukraine between June and July 2023, including areas under Russian military control.<sup>19</sup>

A total of 2,945 IDPs, returnees (both IDPs and refugees) and non-displaced people completed the survey, of whom 58 per cent identified as men, 37 per cent as women and five per cent as non-binary.<sup>20</sup> Thirteen per cent also identified as LGBTIQ+. The findings show that the respondents encountered considerable difficulties, particularly IDPs and returnees. There are also notable differences in the needs and challenges identified and participation in response efforts based on respondents' gender and sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

### Needs and threats are highly gendered

Women, and particularly those who are internally displaced, face specific risks and financial challenges in the Ukraine

conflict.<sup>21</sup> Consistent with such findings, data from the online survey shows a higher percentage of women than men reporting some or much difficulty in meeting basic household needs with their financial resources (see figure 2). Seventeen per cent of displaced women reported difficulties accessing work and livelihoods, compared with 10 per cent of their male counterparts.

In Ukraine, as in many other conflict settings, the burden of care work tends to fall on women, reducing their capacity to engage in paid work.<sup>22</sup> Displaced women are also often reluctant to apply for jobs because they are uncertain about where they will be living in the future.<sup>23</sup> Left unaddressed, their financial vulnerability may undermine their progress towards longer-term resilience.

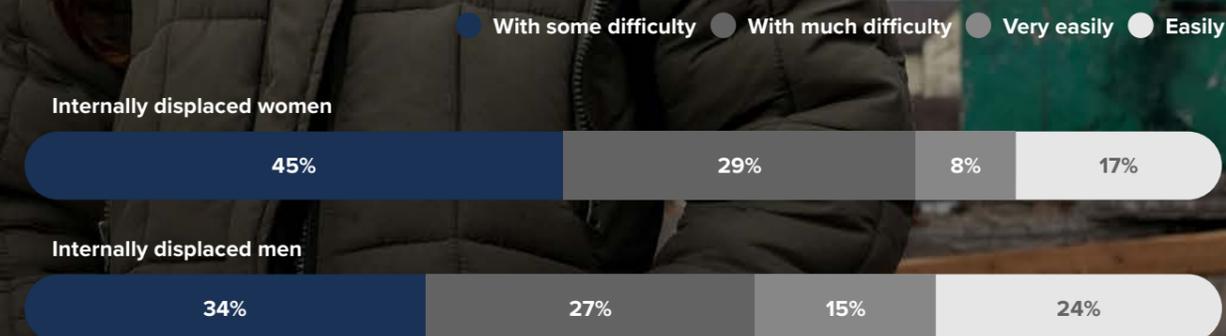
Women are not alone in facing challenges. A higher percentage of male respondents than female, particularly among IDPs, said they had experienced or felt at risk of one or more threats to their personal safety and wellbeing in the month before the survey (see figure 3).<sup>24</sup> The difference was particularly marked for movement restrictions. Sixty-six per cent of men who reported one or more safety threats also had a disability. In terms of housing, a higher percentage of displaced male respondents than female was living in precarious conditions, such as in bomb shelters or tents.

Movements restrictions for men eligible for military service are connected to ongoing mandatory conscription across the whole country.<sup>25</sup> Unsurprisingly, oblasts closest to the frontlines such as Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson and Zaporizhia registered the highest proportion of respondents feeling not safe at all in their current area of residence.

There were also gender differences in IDPs' registration status. Sixty-seven per cent of displaced female respondents had registered their status as an IDP and received a certificate, compared with only 51 per cent of their male counterparts. In western parts of the country, this difference may again be related to fears of conscription, among other possible causes.<sup>26</sup> Only men with proof of military enrolment can be granted status as IDPs and receive the assistance registration affords.<sup>27</sup>

Five per cent of respondents in the online survey said they had not registered as an IDP because doing so "has risks", all of whom identified as male or non-binary. Fifteen per cent of male and female respondents said they had not registered because they believed they would not qualify, and about a quarter selected "other" reasons, which should be investigated further.<sup>28</sup>

### Survey response: Household needs



Online survey data was collected between 1 June and 10 July 2023. Due to rounding, the first bar in the graph adds up to 99%

Figure 2: Level of difficulty reported by displaced respondents in meeting their households' basic needs with their current financial resources, by sex

A 10-year-old girl outside the ruins of a high-rise building in the centre of Borodianka, Ukraine, where she used to live. The amount of evidence on gender dynamics in Ukraine has increased in the past year, but some of it is anecdotal.

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## SOGIESC also play a key role

Disaggregating data by sex reveals important differences, but so does an analysis based on SOGIESC. Sixty-six per cent of surveyed LGBTIQ+ people reported difficulties in accessing one or more goods and services in the month before the survey, compared with 45 per cent of other respondents.<sup>29</sup> These difficulties were reported among IDPs, returnees and non-displaced respondents, showing the crosscutting nature of the issue. The starkest difference concerned access to food, which 21 per cent of LGBTIQ+ respondents reported as a problem, compared with nine per cent of other respondents.

A higher percentage of LGBTIQ+ IDPs and returnees reported threats to their personal safety and wellbeing than their non-displaced counterparts. Sixty-nine per cent of LGBTIQ+ IDPs reported at least one safety threat, compared with 59 per cent of LGBTIQ+ returnees and 47 per cent of LGBTIQ+ non-displaced respondents. Eighteen per cent of LGBTIQ+ IDPs reported threats of exploitation, unsafe or forced labour compared with nine per cent of their non-displaced counterparts.

LGBTIQ+ IDPs also face heightened challenges compared with other IDPs. Seventeen per cent reported threats of forced eviction, compared with nine per cent of other displaced respondents. Some shelters have been established to provide LGBTIQ+ IDPs with safe accommodation, financial support and health services, but they continue to face discrimination and barriers accessing adequate assistance.<sup>30</sup>

## From gendered needs to gendered agency

Investigating the gender dimensions of needs and risks is crucial for targeted responses, but so is assessment of the gendered dynamics of agency. Respondents were

asked whether they had provided support to fellow residents affected by the war. Seventy-two per cent of female respondents said they had. Of these, 36 per cent provided support in a personal capacity, 17 per cent through local woman-led organisations and 20 per cent through other community or social organisations. The overall figure for male respondents was 63 per cent, and a higher proportion than female respondents said they were not interested in providing support to others.

Women's organisations have been addressing many of the needs of IDPs and their communities during the conflict, despite limited resources.<sup>31</sup> As well as catalysing women's agency, survey data shows they also mobilise men and LGBTIQ+ residents overall, expanding their impact and highlighting their potential for diversity and inclusion. Among all LGBTIQ+ respondents, women's organisations were the most frequently reported channel for providing support to fellow residents.

## Implications for policy and programming

The gendered and SOGIESC-differentiated survey findings, along with existing literature on the conflict, show that one-size-fit-all solutions are likely to be ill-suited to address such a complex web of needs. The risks of certain demographic groups may also be less visible or reported on, but they still exist. Many surveyed men, for example, reported several vulnerabilities which differ from women's and need to be accounted for when providing assistance.

The survey results also show that despite experiencing displacement, many respondents still exercised their agency. IDPs and returnees reported supporting fellow residents in higher proportions than non-displaced respondents. The best avenues to harness this potential should be considered for programming purposes, along with the type and extent of IDPs' and returnees' needs.

### Survey response: Threats to personal safety and wellbeing



Online survey data was collected between 1 June and 10 July 2023.

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents reporting experiencing or feeling at risk of threats to their personal safety and wellbeing in the last month, by displacement status and sex

*In Lyman, Ukraine, a 14-year-old boy finds refuge in the basement of an apartment block with his family. Tailoring responses to gender-specific needs is essential for effectively addressing the multifaceted requirements of IDPs.*

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## Health

Women, men, girls and boys and people who identify as LGBTIQ+ have specific health needs that are often more difficult to meet during displacement. In surveys of people displaced by drought in Garissa County, Kenya, 75 per cent of women felt their physical health had deteriorated since their displacement, compared with 62 per cent of men.<sup>32</sup> Women cited lack of food, health services and clean water as reasons for the decline. Limited access to sexual and reproductive health services, hormone therapy and HIV services in displacement settings can also be detrimental to the health of displaced women and members of the LGBTIQ+ community.<sup>33</sup>

Insufficient psychosocial support is also a challenge for people of all genders and sexual orientations, and can hamper their progress towards durable solutions. This was highlighted in interviews IDMC conducted with IDPs in Colombia.<sup>34</sup> Displaced women said their experiences of GBV had hindered their ability to integrate locally because they were afraid to trust anyone in their new community. At the same time, they felt unable to return to their homes, where the violence had taken place due to their ongoing trauma. For many, the impacts had persisted for years and even decades, affecting their ability to rebuild their lives, livelihoods and sense of safety. Displaced men in Colombia also spoke about the psychological impact of experiencing and witnessing violence, and having breakdowns after being unable to support their families as they had before displacement. Few had sought psychosocial support, however, with some noting that men who seek support were perceived as weak.

## Education

The consequences of displacement can last a lifetime, particularly when it interrupts education and limits future opportunities.<sup>35</sup> Displacement often aggravates harmful gendered social norms that devalue girls' education.<sup>36</sup> Surveys IDMC conducted with displaced households in 10 countries highlighted these negative impacts.<sup>37</sup>

In most of the countries assessed, boys' and girls' attendance increased after displacement despite disruptions to their schooling, but in eight out of the 10, displaced girls' attendance rate was lower than boys' (see figure 4). In all 10 countries, it was lower than the attendance rate of girls from non-displaced households. In Colombia, Nigeria and Vanuatu, girls' attendance declined after displacement, as did boys' in Colombia and Vanuatu, albeit by a smaller margin. Cost was cited as a barrier to education for boys and girls across all the countries studied, although IDPs in Kenya were more likely to cite distance from school as a reason for their daughters rather than their sons not attending school. IDPs in Vanuatu said their daughters did not attend school because they had to work, had finished the desired level of education, or were married.<sup>38</sup>

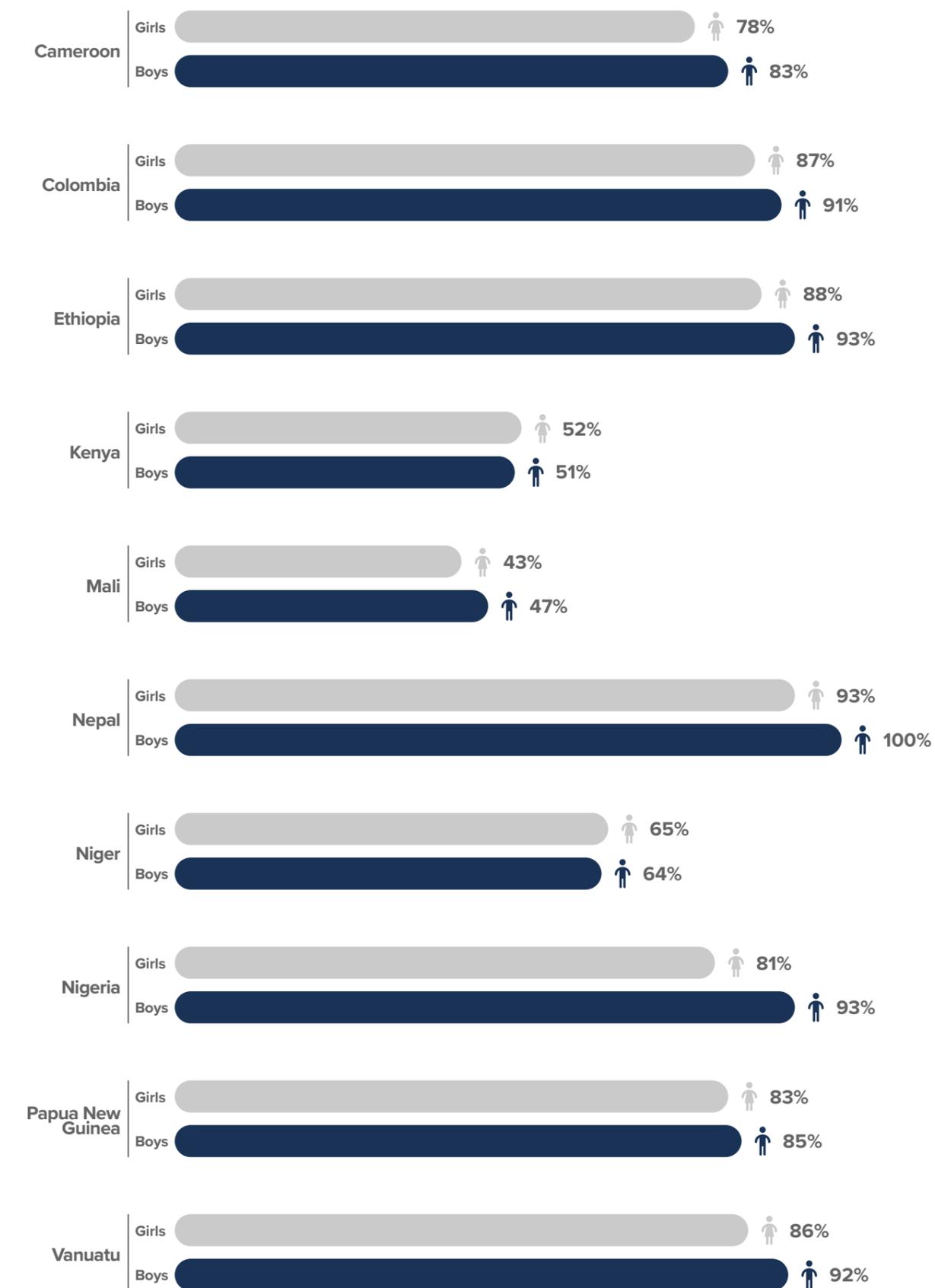
In a study on drought displacement in Ethiopia, 88 per cent of IDPs said their daughters had attended school since their flight, up from 56 per cent in their home areas.<sup>39</sup> Displaced girls with disabilities, however, face intersecting layers of marginalisation. A study in South Sudan found they were prevented from attending school by a lack of specialised and inclusive education services, which heightened their social isolation and affected their mental health.<sup>40</sup>

## Housing

The inability to legally own or rent a home or secure enough income to pay for it can force displaced women to live in camps or informal settlements, where they find fewer livelihood opportunities and may be at higher risk of communicable diseases, GBV and other threats.<sup>41</sup> Access to safe shelter is also particularly challenging for LGBTIQ+ IDPs, as evidenced in Colombia, Haiti, Kenya and Thailand.<sup>42</sup>

Entrenched patriarchal traditions and barriers to justice mechanisms can make it difficult for displaced women to resolve disputes when their housing, land and property (HLP) rights are denied. This has been documented in Somalia, where their HLP rights are frequently mediated through male relatives, sometimes leaving them at risk of

## Survey response: School attendance of displaced children



Surveys commissioned by IDMC between 2021 and 2023

Figure 4: Percentage of displaced children attending school, by sex

eviction and exploitation.<sup>43</sup> The pattern of being uprooted and displaced repeatedly undermines women's prospects of integration.

As women are also less likely than men to possess documentary evidence of their land tenure, they are at greater risk of encountering difficulties in reclaiming and returning to their homes. In an assessment in Iraq, 61 per cent of displaced female-headed households reported facing barriers to return as a result of HLP issues, compared with 46 per cent of male-headed households.<sup>44</sup>

## Durable solutions

If left unaddressed, gender inequalities in displacement can have lasting repercussions and undermine IDPs' ability to achieve durable solutions by returning to their home areas, integrating locally or resettling elsewhere in their country. Representative organisations are playing a key role in highlighting these issues and galvanising action to address them. In Colombia, for example, organisations led by women have been transformative in advocating for female IDPs' rights and supporting their efforts to bring their displacement to a sustainable end (see spotlight 2).



*Young girls in Burcoin the Togdheer region of Somalia receive vocational training from a local NGO. Gender inequalities in displacement can have lasting repercussions and undermine IDPs' ability to achieve durable solutions. © UNOCHA/Ahmed Fais*

## Spotlight 2: Displaced women as agents of change in Colombia

Decades of armed conflict and violence have left Colombia home to one of the world's largest populations of IDPs.<sup>45</sup> Women have borne a disproportionate burden of the violence and continue to face specific challenges during displacement, including GBV, sexual exploitation and limited access to services.<sup>46</sup>

The city of Villavicencio in the department of Meta is home to more than 87,000 registered victims of forced internal displacement, of whom 52 per cent are women.<sup>47</sup> It has long been a place of refuge for people fleeing conflict and violence in rural areas of Meta and the Orinoquía region more broadly.<sup>48</sup> Qualitative interviews with woman-led organisations and female community leaders in the city reveal some of the ways in which displaced women are driving change and how their efforts in supporting other IDPs can be enhanced.<sup>49</sup>

### Advocacy, monitoring and accountability

Woman-led organisations have been instrumental in drawing attention to displaced women's needs and rights in the region and lobbying for their political inclusion. The Network of Displaced Women in Meta (Red de Mujeres Desplazadas del Meta), which was founded in 2007, has built a sense soli-

arity across the department. Its 50 member organisations work closely with leaders such as the women's secretary of the Villavicencio mayor's office to advocate for the rights of displaced women in public policy forums and roundtables, and to educate women about the laws that affect them.

Similarly, the Plataforma EICOS Meta serves as a watchdog in monitoring the implementation of policies relating to durable solutions.<sup>50</sup> A group of displaced women founded the organisation in 2013 to support the development and implementation of the public policy on gender equality for women of the department of Meta (2012-2023).<sup>51</sup> The policy was developed in consultation with displaced women and other victims of the conflict, and is intended to promote their right to a life free of violence and their economic empowerment, autonomy and political participation.

The platform's representatives meet the public authorities regularly to monitor the allocation of budgets linked with the policy and the implementation of gender provisions in development plans. Its role in holding the authorities to account for ensuring that displaced women's needs and perspectives are considered in development action has been crucial.

### Fostering women's socioeconomic empowerment

Durable solutions require sustainable economic inclusion, but a lack of employment opportunities is one of the most significant barriers to integration for displaced women in Villavicencio. Most come from rural areas, where they engaged in agriculture. Their inexperience in other sectors, combined with domestic and child-rearing responsibilities, discrimination and disruption to their own education, are common obstacles to employment. The organisation EnRedHadas, which was founded by a group of displaced women, provides advice and a network to support women's economic empowerment, including by selling artwork and handicrafts at local markets.<sup>52</sup>

Woman-led organisations are also strengthening displaced women's capacities in other domains. Buscafuturo, which is a member the Red de Mujeres Desplazadas del Meta, teaches women about ancestral customs and medicinal plants they can use to address health issues at home, given that many face barriers to healthcare.<sup>53</sup> The initiative is intended to equip women to take early and preventative action on their health and reduce their reliance on mainstream services.

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**“[Displaced] women should have a place where we can put our skills into practice because it is useless to train us if we do not have practical opportunities to use what we have learned to generate an income.”**

– *Representative from a woman-led organisation*



*A mother and daughter on the way to school in Guajira, Colombia. Barriers to employment for displaced women often stem from disrupted education, caregiving responsibilities, discrimination, and limited work experience in other sectors.*

© UNICEF/UN0775941/Gonzalez

## Promoting peacebuilding and reconciliation

Displaced women have been indispensable in advocating for peace talks and facilitating reconciliation processes, both of which are key to preventing future displacement. EnRedHadas represents displaced women and other victims of the conflict in projects linked with preserving memory and truth.<sup>54</sup> It also organises dialogues for university students about the conflict and pathways to peace. By fostering understanding, it encourages social cohesion among displaced communities and host populations, laying the groundwork for durable solutions.

### Challenges and recommendations

Despite the pivotal role displaced women are playing in supporting IDPs and their broader communities, discrimination and sexism hamper their efforts. Women who are community leaders and human rights defenders also face threats to their safety, and armed groups continue to target them. Lack of financial resources and a reliance on volunteers limit the impact of woman-led organisations and threaten the sustainability of their work.

Representatives of these organisations and community leaders interviewed in Villavicencio identified several ways to address the challenges they face and enhance their contribution. In addition to improving the availability of funding, they noted that woman-led organisations required greater technical and financial training to use their resources more effectively.

One promising example is a programme led by the mayor of Villavicencio's office, which offers women training in administrative assistance, accounting and other areas of work to strengthen their capacity to transform the region.<sup>55</sup> UN Women is also strengthening the strategies and programmatic capacities of local civil society organisations (CSOs) working on women's rights to ensure the sustainability of their work and empower displaced women and girls.<sup>56</sup>

The organisation has already supported 13 women's rights civil society organisations via the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund in various aspects, including improving their leadership, organisational and strategic skills, donor reporting and self-financing mechanisms.<sup>57</sup> It has also trained 616 displaced women in 10 departments on their rights and political participation.<sup>58</sup>

To advance durable solutions for displaced women more broadly, interviewees recommended improving their access to livelihoods as a priority. This means ensuring that capacity-building programmes are matched with practical employment opportunities that respond to market needs. Greater access to seed-funding would encourage displaced women's entrepreneurship.

Interviewees cautioned, however, that focusing solely on women's economic empowerment and overlooking men's needs has the potential to alter household power relations and increase women's risk of intimate partner violence. To mitigate this threat, thorough risk analyses should be conducted before implementing projects for displaced women.

Given that sustained peace is a precondition for durable solutions, woman-led organisations should continue to be encouraged to play a role in preventing displacement through peacebuilding and teaching women self-protection activities.

Displaced women also require greater psychosocial support to enhance their social integration and role as agents of change. Training woman-led organisations in this area could enable them to support other displaced women. At the same time, it is important for government, humanitarian and development stakeholders to give greater visibility to the experiences of displaced women and provide them with safe spaces to share their stories, inspire each other and generate solidarity.

Displaced women are best placed to identify the conditions necessary to live a life of safety and dignity. The promising examples from Colombia highlight that their perspectives, capacities and networks are key to forging lasting solutions to the country's internal displacement situation.

“

**“We have been agents of change in every sense of the word. We have collaborated with other [displaced] women to help them overcome difficult situations and tell them how we can move forward.”**

– *Representative from a woman-led organisation*



*Volunteers part of a woman-led group in Bajo Calima, Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca, Colombia, organised to help women support women amidst the armed conflict. Displaced women have been indispensable in advocating for peace talks and facilitating reconciliation processes.*

© UNHCR/Juan Arredondo

# Gender-responsive action

## Policy development

There have been important developments in global policymaking since the 1990s in incorporating a gender perspective into action on displacement. These initiatives, however, have largely been based on binary notions of gender, focussing primarily on targeted action for displaced women and girls. While some policy initiatives have called for “gender-sensitive” programming, others have called for action that is “gender-responsive”. These terms are sometimes used interchangeably, and both refer to approaches that consider gender norms, roles and inequalities.<sup>59</sup> The latter, however, also tends to include measures that have been taken to actively address them.<sup>60</sup> “Gender Transformative” programming is considered to go even further by seeking to address the root causes of gender inequality within society.<sup>61</sup>

The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action sets out concrete commitments by governments and other stakeholders to empower women and girls, including those who are displaced.<sup>62</sup> It identifies protection, assistance and training for displaced women as a key strategic objective.<sup>63</sup> The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement of 1998 also emphasise that special efforts should be made to address the specific needs of displaced women and girls to ensure their full and equal access to health, education and other services, and participation in planning.<sup>64</sup>

The landmark UN Security Council resolution 1325 of 2000 calls on all stakeholders to increase women and girls’ participation in preventing conflict and promoting peace and security.<sup>65</sup> In doing so, it marks an important shift from the characterisation of women and girls’ as inherently “vulnerable” towards recognising their agency.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction also recognises the importance of empowering women to lead.<sup>66</sup> In addition to inclusive and gender-sensitive disaster risk

reduction (DRR) policies, plans and programmes, the framework calls for the collection of sex-disaggregated data to better understand the gendered nature of disaster risk and inform DRR decision making.

A gender lens has also been incorporated into national laws and policies on internal displacement. Women’s leadership, gender responsiveness and social inclusion are crosscutting priorities of Vanuatu’s national policy on displacement linked to climate change and disasters, which calls for the promotion of gender-inclusive participatory methodologies in data collection.<sup>67</sup> Bangladesh’s national strategy on the management of displacement associated with disasters and climate change calls for data to be disaggregated by sex, age and other factors, such as female heads of households.<sup>68</sup> It also includes specific funds for gender-sensitive evacuation shelters.<sup>69</sup>

Guidance on how to integrate gender equality into laws and policies on climate change and disaster management has been developed to advance similar efforts in other countries.<sup>70</sup> Such developments are steps in the right direction, but more inclusive laws and policies on internal displacement are still needed.

Recent initiatives have emerged to encourage the implementation of gender commitments on displacement. A collective submission by NGOs and CSOs to the UN Secretary General’s High-level Panel on Internal Displacement called for an age, gender and diversity-inclusive approach to the phenomenon and set out concrete recommendations on how to do so.<sup>71</sup>

The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), UN Women and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) have initiated a multi-stakeholder consultation process to develop a gender action plan that will support implementation of the Sendai framework.<sup>72</sup> Beyond these initiatives, promising practices are emerging across the globe in incorporating



Two men stand outside a repair shop destroyed by Cyclone Pam in the northern part of Tanna island, Vanuatu. The country’s national policy on displacement linked to climate change and disasters calls for gender-inclusive participatory methodologies in data collection. © IFRC

a gender perspective into action to prevent displacement, address its impacts and support IDPs in their pursuit of durable solutions.

## Preventing and reducing the risk of displacement

In line with the Sendai framework, there have been promising efforts to include women and girls in DRR and climate mitigation strategies, particularly in the Asia Pacific region.<sup>73</sup> Innovative methodologies are also being adopted to better understand and address the risks that LGBTIQ+ people face before and during disasters.

Oxfam's Down By The River project, for example, explored the extent to which sexual and gender minorities were included in DRR and humanitarian response efforts in Fiji after tropical cyclone Winston in 2016.<sup>74</sup> Using a story-telling methodology, the project placed the experiences of those affected by the cyclone at the centre of a workshop with DRR and humanitarian stakeholders to inform recommendations for more inclusive action.<sup>75</sup>

Strengthening communities' socioeconomic resilience and fostering social cohesion helps to reduce the risk of displacement linked with conflict and violence. In Burkina Faso, the Fraternal Union of Believers (Union Fraternelle des Croyants) in the town of Dori provides income-generating activities to displaced youth and women and host communities to foster peaceful cohabitation.<sup>76</sup> It also aims to strengthen community-watch mechanisms for the detection, monitoring and prevention of violent radicalisation and extremism.<sup>77</sup>

## Addressing the gendered impacts of displacement

Examples of more tailored programming are emerging to address gender inequalities in IDPs' access to housing, health, education and livelihoods, and to mitigate the negative impacts of displacement. In response to concerns that LGBTIQ+ IDPs were struggling to find safe shelter in Ukraine, for example, the Alliance Global – the country's largest LGBTIQ+ organisation – set up a shelter in Lviv where IDPs could receive food, social and psychological support and HIV services.<sup>78</sup>

To protect women's health rights in the Somali region of Ethiopia, the organisation EngenderHealth led a programme that provided quality sexual and reproductive health services to more than 22,000 internally displaced women and girls.<sup>79</sup> In addition to running community-awareness activities, it collaborated with the government, UNFPA and other partners to integrate sexual and reproductive health into humanitarian response efforts and to gather data on IDPs' health needs.<sup>80</sup>

Other programmes have been designed to help displaced girls overcome education barriers. Plan International and the Australian Humanitarian Partnership have set up temporary learning centres in camps for IDPs in Myanmar's Rakhine state with the aim of increasing the number of girls and women among students and teachers.<sup>81</sup> Young women have had the opportunity to work as teachers in the same centres where they studied, supporting other displaced girls' education.<sup>82</sup>

UN Women's leadership empowerment, access and protection project promotes the recovery of women displaced by conflict in Somalia, whose livelihood opportunities and access to finance are limited.<sup>83</sup> It has used the village saving and loan association (VSLA) model as a method of collective financial pooling, saving and credit. Each VSLA has 25 members, who pool funds each month to enable one participant to start a small business or expand an existing one. Gaps and challenges remain, but the VSLA model is an innovative way of increasing displaced women's access to microfinance and generating solidarity.<sup>84</sup>

Humanitarian organisations in various countries have also tried to mitigate the disproportionate threat of GBV to women and girls in displacement settings. In Cameroon, for instance, the Jesuit Refugee Service organised a Girls Leading Our World camp to provide a safe space for displaced girls to share their experiences, promote their leadership and provide them with the skills necessary to reduce the risk of GBV.<sup>85</sup>

Most programmes target women and girls directly, but men have also been engaged as agents of change to prevent violence against women and girls in conflict settings.<sup>86</sup> IOM trained displaced men in South Sudan to understand the effects of gender power imbalances.<sup>87</sup> Participants made a pact to help mitigate inequalities and GBV in their community by raising awareness and engaging women and girls in leadership and decision-making activities.<sup>88</sup>

## Supporting durable solutions and promoting participation

The 2010 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons considers an IDP to have achieved a durable solution if they are able to enjoy an adequate standard of living without discrimination.<sup>89</sup> This requires access to basic goods and services, such as shelter and housing, which are sensitive to gender.<sup>90</sup>

In line with the framework's guidance, humanitarian, development and government agencies are developing projects intended to address the specific barriers people of different genders face in achieving lasting solutions. Working with the Legal Aid Commission of Sri Lanka, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) helped women displaced by the civil war to exercise their land rights, after it was found that they had been disproportionately affected by discriminatory land laws, as well as land seizures and redistribution.<sup>91</sup> The project combined awareness raising, legal representation and advice, mobile legal clinics, capacity building, transitional shelter support, housing materials and reconstruction grants to empower women and support their return.

Ensuring the meaningful participation of IDPs of different genders in decision making on displacement is essential to improve the impact of interventions. There are a growing number of initiatives designed to tackle the barriers women and girls confront in participating in decision making and enhancing their roles as agents of change.<sup>92</sup> New research from Cameroon highlights the vital role woman-led organisations are playing in peacebuilding, which is essential for lasting solutions (see spotlight 3).



## Spotlight 3: Woman-led organisations driving durable solutions in Cameroon

Violence in south-west and north-west Cameroon continues to exact a heavy toll on civilians, including increasing casualties and continuous displacements.<sup>93</sup> The violence, which initially arose from peaceful protests calling for the preservation of regional identities, escalated in 2017.<sup>94</sup> More than 375,000 people had been internally displaced by the crisis as of March 2023.<sup>95</sup>

Women have been disproportionately affected, making up 60 per cent of those displaced and enduring economic challenges, physical threats and GBV.<sup>96</sup> The primary concern among IDPs is the lack of civil documentation, exposing them to significant vulnerabilities in access to rights and services.<sup>97</sup> Children, particularly young girls, face heightened risks including trafficking, early marriage and abuse.<sup>98</sup>

Faced with such challenges, women have emerged as pivotal figures, actively contributing as peacemakers and agents of change. However, their meaningful participation in political discussions is limited, and their concerns are often sidelined.<sup>99</sup> This exclusion was evident at the 2019 Major National Dialogue in Yaoundé intended to address the violence, but which overlooked gender considerations and grassroots representation from English-speaking regions.<sup>100</sup>

Qualitative interviews with woman-led CSOs in the English-speaking regions highlighted the gendered repercussions of displacement and their efforts to empower displaced women, paving the way for durable solutions for their communities.

### Gendered impacts and the role of woman-led CSOs

Woman-led CSOs in south-west and north-west Cameroon have advocated for internally displaced women. Reach Out Cameroon offers a multifaceted approach spanning protection, health, water, sanitation, economic empowerment and psychosocial support.<sup>101</sup> One of its projects focuses on the transformative potential of micro-loans.<sup>102</sup> The project combines seed capital with financial education, empowering women to establish income-generating activities in their host area while fostering self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods. Beyond countering economic disempowerment, it has had positive ripple effects. Beneficiaries have been able to send their children to school, host community economies and local integration have been boosted and other women inspired to participate.

Displacement amplifies struggles to reclaim HLP rights. The Authentique Memorial Empowerment Foundation (AMEF) underlines how cultural norms and legal barriers complicate matters, especially for displaced women after the death of a husband or father.<sup>103</sup> As a mediator in related disputes, AMEF bolsters women's autonomy, economic independence and land ownership while facilitating peaceful resolution and cultivating a stronger sense of collective identity and community cooperation.

Addressing the complex challenges faced by displaced women often requires an intersectional perspective.<sup>104</sup> The Mbororo, a nomadic indigenous group in north-west Cameroon, are significantly affected by violence. Separatists target them based on their perceived ties to the government, and mounting tensions with settled communities have led to damage to their property and displacement.<sup>105</sup> Distinct social norms and their Muslim faith add to their marginalisation and the difficulties Mbororo children face in accessing education.<sup>106</sup> The situation is further complicated by gender issues, in that Mbororo girls are often married off when they reach puberty.<sup>107</sup>

Displacement aggravates the situation still further, increasing obstacles to their education advancement and the socio-economic conditions that push young girls into early marriage.<sup>108</sup> Tailored initiatives by the Daraja Reube Mbororo Development Association (DAREM) have emerged to address these challenges as violence displaces Mbororo people into more urban areas.

“

**“Internally displaced women understand the importance of enhancing their skills and capacity to effectively champion their advocacy. We believe that their voices should be heard directly from them, rather than intermediaries.”**

— *Representative of Daraja Reube Mbororo Development Association*

*A woman with livestock near Buea, the capital of the south-west region of Cameroon. Ongoing violence in the region has disproportionately impacted women, leading to economic hardships, physical threats, and gender-based violence.*

© UNOCHA/ Giles Clarke



**“This orientation towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis and the empowerment of communities to voice their concerns, especially women, has gained significant momentum over the past two years. Women are increasingly finding their voices.”**

*– Representative of Authentique Memorial Empowerment Foundation (AMEF)*

By providing essential livelihood support and skills training, such as baking and bookkeeping, DAREM empowers women and girls to contribute to their families' income and education. Adult literacy programmes equip displaced Mbororo women with skills for effective financial management and business, and DAREM's Speak Out for Peace initiative offers them a platform to share their stories and concerns.

### **Women's peace and security agenda**

Parallel to grassroots initiatives, peacebuilding and conflict resolution are instrumental to lasting solutions and preventing future displacement. To ensure gender sensitivity in these efforts, implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and its accompanying agenda is of paramount importance in Cameroon.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Cameroon Section (WILPF Cameroon) advocated for the adoption of the country's 2017 National Action Plan.<sup>109</sup> Anchored in this advocacy is the organisation's analysis, which dissects gender-related power dynamics in the country's conflicts.<sup>110</sup> This is intended to guide the creation of sustainable peace strategies by both national and international stakeholders. It also contributed significantly to shaping Cameroon's 2018-2020 National Action Plan.<sup>111</sup>

The South West/North West Women's Task Force (SNWOT), a coalition of female human rights defenders, peacebuilders and CSOs active in these regions, is a promising example of the capacity of woman-led organisations to provide a platform for the voices of women affected by violence, including displaced women.<sup>112</sup> It champions peace through a narrative rooted in humanity, conducting campaigns that advocate ceasefires and dialogue.<sup>113</sup>

The WPS Agenda also encompasses gender-sensitive approaches to disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) efforts. This is exemplified by Cameroon's DDR Gender Strategy for 2021 to 2025, which offers support for communities affected by conflict, former combatants and their dependents.<sup>114</sup> Within this framework, tools such as community violence reduction projects, led by the National Committee for DDR, empower both displaced and non-displaced women for conflict resolution and successful reintegration.<sup>115</sup>

The initiative also employs a gender-sensitive approach that acknowledges women's significant involvement in the conflict. By valuing their insights and experiences, it aims to involve them in the development of DDR policies. This not only enriches the policy framework but also adeptly tackles the unique challenges and needs faced by women who were both active participants in the conflict and victims of displacement.

### **Overcoming challenges and future prospects**

Women have emerged from the complex violence in Cameroon as agents of change and peacebuilders, but interviews reveal the challenges they have faced, notably their exclusion and marginalisation from mainstream peacebuilding initiatives, and inadequate funding. These barriers hinder CSOs' capacity to empower and support displaced women.

Interviewees' recommendations underscore the importance of displaced women's participation in decision-making processes and national dialogues, and the need for targeted empowerment initiatives and gender-sensitive peacebuilding and post-conflict policies. Empowering displaced women is key to lasting peace, and addressing their needs and concerns to prevent future displacement.

*A displaced woman working as part of a fish farming project.*

*Tailored empowerment and gender-sensitive responses to internal displacement are essential, as empowering displaced women plays a pivotal role in achieving lasting peace, addressing their needs, and preventing future displacement.*

© NRC/ Ingebjørg Kårstad

# Improving data on gender



## Challenges

Women, men, girls and boys and people who identify as LGBTIQ+ face gender-specific risks in displacement, but few data publishers provide information disaggregated by sex, gender identity or sexual orientation. As a result, accurate figures on the number of IDPs of different genders are unavailable at the global, regional and national level. More granular information on their diverse experiences, needs, capacities and the barriers they confront is also lacking.

In order to start bridging and raise awareness on these gaps, we began publishing estimates of the number of IDPs at the global and national level disaggregated by sex in 2022, using national-level demographic data as a proxy (see figure 5). The estimates for 154 countries are contained in IDMC's Global Internal Displacement Database.<sup>116</sup>

These estimates provide a sense of the scale of the issue, but they still have limitations. Evidence from various countries, for example, shows that the proportion of women and girls among IDPs is often higher than among the general population.<sup>117</sup>

Several factors limit the availability of gender-disaggregated data on IDPs, including financial and resource constraints, methodological challenges and ethical and cultural factors. National governments are primarily responsible for monitoring internal displacement, but often lack the capacity to do so systematically. Additional investments are needed to collect, analyse and use gender-inclusive data on IDPs, which may be out of reach for many of the countries most affected by displacement.

## Global numbers of internally displaced women and girls

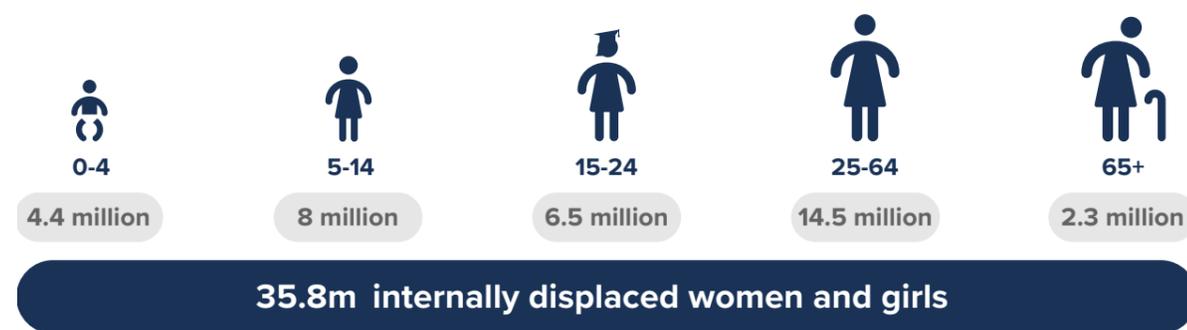


Figure 5: Global estimate of the number of women and girls living in internal displacement due to conflict, violence and disasters at the end of 2022

The humanitarian community and CSOs play a key role in filling gaps in national monitoring, but they too confront challenges, including diverse perspectives in the data they collect. Humanitarian assessments involving IDPs, for instance, tend to be conducted at the household level to enable interviewers to survey a large proportion of the target population in a comprehensive way.<sup>118</sup>

If information is not gathered on each household member, however, it makes it difficult to obtain a breakdown of the gender composition of a displaced population. Assessments that rely on the head of household to answer questions on behalf of its members also fail to capture the diversity of needs. Given that men tend to identify as heads of household, this approach risks skewing survey samples to mostly male respondents and excluding the perspective of women, who may have unique health or protection needs, or know more about household expenditure and children's nutrition and education.<sup>119</sup>

Information on gender-sensitive issues such as the risk and prevalence of GBV is also useful for tailoring interventions, but it is rarely possible or advisable to collect via quantitative surveys because of the risk of further traumatising respondents.<sup>120</sup> Collecting data on IDPs' gender identity or sexual orientation can also put people at risk, particularly in countries with discriminatory laws or social attitudes towards sexual and gender minorities. This means the experiences of non-binary IDPs and those who identify as LGBTIQ+ tend to remain hidden.

## Why data matters

The achievement of gender equality is explicitly called for in Sustainable Development Goal five and has been recognised as a precondition to realising all goals in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.<sup>121</sup> The gaps in gender-inclusive data on IDPs, however, flatten their experiences and lead to blanket approaches to displacement, which risk leaving people with specific needs behind.<sup>122</sup>

Improving the availability and use of gender-disaggregated data on IDPs is essential to give greater visibility to their unique and varied perspectives and to inform more inclusive responses. Further disaggregation by disability status and other characteristics is also needed to understand IDPs' intersecting risks and tailor programmes more effectively.

Disaggregated data is also crucial for measuring the impact of interventions on displacement and IDPs' prog-

ress towards achieving durable solutions. It also plays an important advocacy role and provides an evidence base for policy and legislative changes.<sup>123</sup> Robust data also helps to dismantle myths and stereotypes that feed stigma and discrimination towards IDPs.<sup>124</sup>

## Global data landscape

IDMC's Internal Displacement Index (IDI) assesses, among other factors, the availability and quality of data on the phenomenon published or endorsed by governments in 46 countries.<sup>125</sup> The results for 2022 found that 26 countries did not publish data disaggregated by sex and age for either conflict or disaster displacement (see figures 6 and 7).<sup>126</sup> Other forms of disaggregation, by disability status or ethnicity, for example, are even more rare.

Mozambique and Ethiopia are the only countries that collect and publish data on displacement triggered by conflict, violence and disasters that is fully disaggregated by age and sex. In Mozambique, IOM, the National Institute for Disaster Management and other humanitarian agencies collaborate to collect data on disaster displacement. In the aftermath of tropical storm Freddy in April 2023, IOM published figures of the number of IDPs by sex and age, and the proportion of people with a disability, pregnant women and unaccompanied minors among the displaced population.<sup>127</sup> It also publishes data on conflict displacement in Cabo Delgado.<sup>128</sup>

IOM also collects sex-disaggregated data on displacement linked with conflict in Ukraine via its phone-based general population survey.<sup>129</sup> In addition to determining immediate needs, the survey provides a preliminary assessment of IDPs' progress in resolving their displacement using the criteria established in the IASC framework on durable solutions.<sup>130</sup> In doing so, it highlights differences in the intentions of displaced men and women and the barriers they encounter integrating in their current location.

Among the other countries the IDI assesses, Colombia stands out as a promising example of disaggregated data collection. The dataset from the government's Victim's Registry (Registro Único de Víctimas) is available through an online dashboard.<sup>131</sup> The registry, which relies on the voluntary registration of IDPs and other victims of the country's conflict, contains comprehensive information on their age, gender, ethnicity and disability among other factors, which helps to better understand how specific vulnerable groups face certain needs. Although unregistered IDPs are

not captured, it still represents one of the most comprehensive and reliable sources of information on internal displacement globally.

The government has also established a dedicated measurement of IDPs' progress in overcoming their displacement-related vulnerabilities (Superación de Situación de Vulnerabilidad).<sup>132</sup> The assessment is conducted twice a year and brings together data collected by various government agencies on eight rights-based criteria.<sup>133</sup> The results are analysed by age, gender, ethnicity and other factors to identify individuals who need to be prioritised.<sup>134</sup> The information is then shared with relevant departments for action.

The latest assessment indicates that 58 per cent of men who are registered victims of displacement have access to adequate housing, compared with 55 per cent of women and 51 per cent of victims who identify as LGBTQ+.<sup>135</sup>

Other good data disaggregation practices exist beyond the 46 countries analysed. The US Census Bureau began conducting a monthly household pulse survey in 2020, initially to measure the socioeconomic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>136</sup> New questions were subsequently added to obtain data on the impacts of living through disasters. Data is collected on the number of people displaced by disasters and the duration of their displacement. It is disaggregated by sex, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, income group and other factors, making it one of the best datasets of its kind in terms of disaggregation.

In addition to government-led initiatives, NGOs play a key role in including a gender lens in displacement data. REACH, a leading humanitarian initiative that provides granular data on crises, disasters and displacement, has made important efforts to adapt its practices to improve gender inclusivity in research and programming.<sup>137</sup> It included indicators in its 2023 multi-sector needs assessment in Palestine to better understand how gender, together with other factors such as age, disability, sexual orientation and literacy, affect someone's access to essential services and humanitarian assistance.<sup>138</sup>

REACH also led the qualitative component of a similar countrywide assessment in South Sudan to gather information on gender-sensitive topics that could be incorporated into humanitarian planning. These examples highlight how innovative and gender-inclusive methods are needed to address blind spots in humanitarian research. Such approaches will serve to strengthen the quality, representativeness and utility of the data collected.

A country's ability to collect and analyse gender-inclusive data on displacement depends on the tools and human resources it has available and the establishment of tailored processes for gender mainstreaming. An assessment of the data landscape in Tonga in 2023 found that significant investments were needed to strengthen the collection and use of gender-inclusive data on disaster displacement, despite some emerging good practices (see spotlight 4).

### Internal displacement data: disaggregation by sex in 46 countries

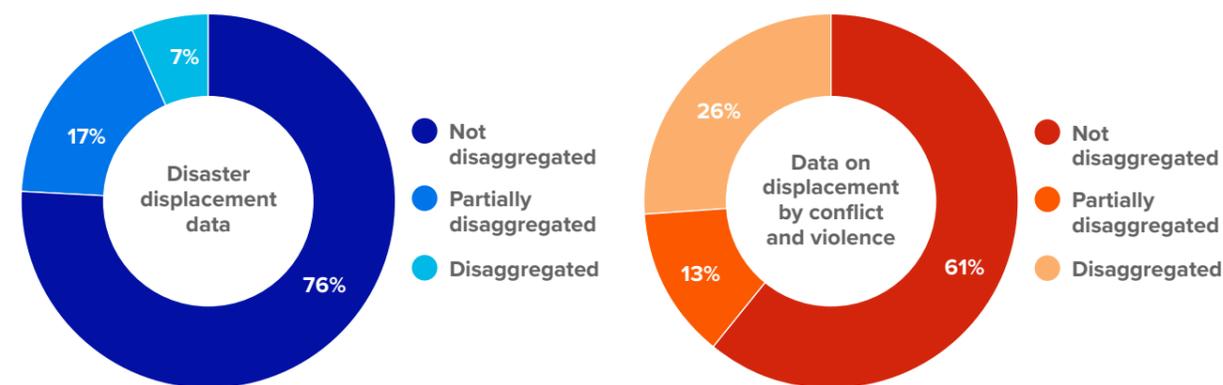


Figure 6 & 7: Percentage of 46 countries assessed where disaster and conflict displacement data is disaggregated, partially disaggregated or not disaggregated by sex



Women find support in a gender-segregated safe space at IDP Site A in Bentiu, Unity State in northern South Sudan. Filling gaps in gender-inclusive data on IDPs can prevent blanket approaches to displacement which risk leaving people with specific needs behind. © UNOCHA/Alioune NDIAYE

# Spotlight 4: Mapping gender-inclusive data on disaster displacement in Tonga

The Kingdom of Tonga, which spans more than 170 islands to the east of Australia and the north of New Zealand, is highly exposed to natural hazards including cyclones, storm surges and volcanic eruptions. The country's disaster management authority collects data on the number of houses damaged or destroyed by disasters each year, which can be used as a proxy for displacement.

Using its initial damage assessment (IDA) form, the authority captures the sex and age of household members whose homes have been destroyed, from which sex and age-disaggregated data on the number of people estimated to be displaced can be extrapolated – a rare, good practice (see figure 8). The government does not, however, use the sex and age breakdown from the IDA to systematically analyse gendered impacts and needs linked to disaster displacement. This gap may be explained by the limited resources the authorities have available during an emergency response.

Another important aspect of gender-sensitive data collection is whether respondents may identify with non-binary genders. People assigned male at birth but whose gender expression is feminine are traditionally recognised and

known as fakaleiti in Tonga, and the authorities have contact with fakaleiti CSOs about their needs during disaster responses. Standard data instruments such as the IDA, however, do not enable respondents to identify with non-binary genders, which makes it difficult to assess the specific vulnerabilities that displaced fakaleiti and other sexual minorities experience during disasters.

Another finding from the assessment points to the need to store and centralise gender-related data collected during emergencies. During the recent Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai (HTHH) volcanic eruption and tsunami, sex and age-disaggregated data was collected at evacuation centres as part of the daily response, but although there is provision for it in situation report templates, it did not feature in the HTHH situation reports because it was not reported to national authorities.

By making sure it does appear in future situation reports from evacuation centres, the authorities could improve gender data at little or no extra cost. A further recommendation would be to mainstream enhanced gender-sensitive data collection beyond sex and age disaggregation into standard post-disaster assessments such as IDAs. These improvements would benefit from being designed in consultation with women's CSOs, which traditionally play a significant role in monitoring the gendered impacts of disasters in Tonga.

The practice of collecting sex-disaggregated data on households affected by housing destruction is promising. Limitations can be traced to a lack of gender mainstreaming in the data collection instruments and a lack of human resources for analysis. Further strengthening of gender sensitivity in country-level displacement data will require dedicated resources to design survey instruments, centralise the data collected and raise awareness of gender-related vulnerabilities during displacement, including those of sexual minorities.

## Housing destruction: disaggregated household data



The data is based on the initial damage assessment conducted after the eruption by the Tonga National Emergency Management Office and its partners. It only includes households affected by level 3 housing damage - severely damaged - and level 4 - completely damaged.

Figure 8: Sex and age-disaggregated data on households affected by housing destruction during the 2022 Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano eruption

## Gender disaggregated disaster data collection in Tonga

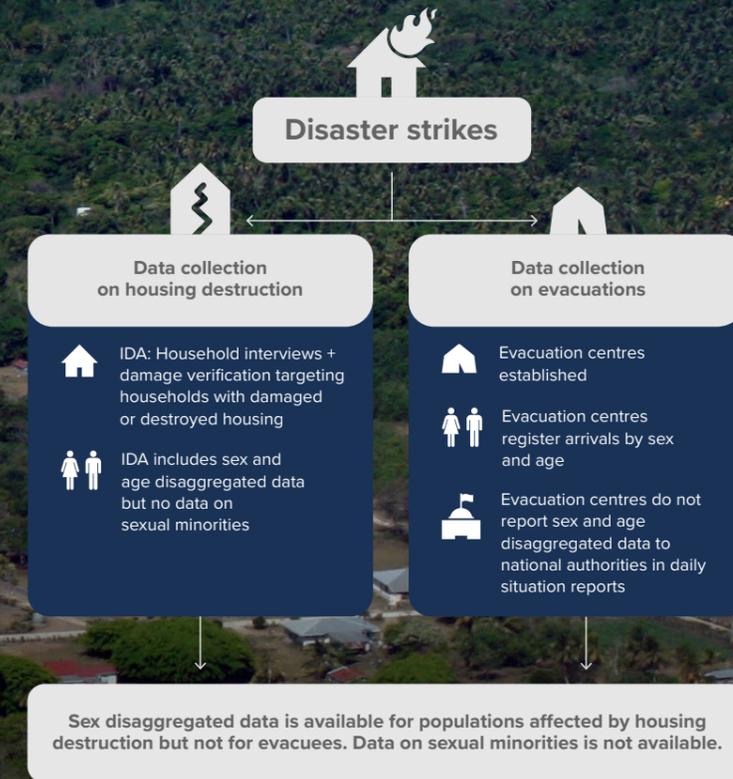


Figure 9: Representation of the collection of gender-related disaster displacement data in Tonga

Destruction in Hihifo, the main village on the island of Niua-toutupu, Tonga, following a tsunami generated by a magnitude 8.0 earthquake in 2009. The country's disaster management authority records the sex and age of household members in destroyed homes, a valuable but uncommon practice.

Informed, targeted and effective humanitarian action on displacement requires a robust evidence base. The Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics recommends that data on IDPs be disaggregated by age and sex as a starting point, and if feasible by other characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, disability and education level.<sup>139</sup> New approaches and greater financial and human resources are needed to implement these recommendations and ensure data is ethically collected, safely shared and used to inform action.

## Improving data collection

Several factors influence the extent to which the perspectives of women and people with diverse sexual identities are included in data on IDPs, including the location, time and method of data collection, for example whether it takes place online or in person, and enumerators' gender. Using quota sampling and interviewing household members who do not identify as the head is effective in capturing more diverse perspectives in surveys. Qualitative methods also tend to be more appropriate than quantitative surveys to collect sensitive information on GBV and issues that IDPs from the LGBTIQ+ community face.

Disaggregated information on IDPs' intersecting vulnerabilities and needs is valuable to inform humanitarian programming, but information on the gender dynamics of their agency and their progress in pursuit of durable solutions is also crucial. Collecting more qualitative data on women as agents of change would help to better understand how they are already promoting durable solutions and what opportunities and resources are needed to enhance their role. Expanding the scope of analysis in this way would encourage a more people-centred approach to programming on durable solutions, which may yield more fruitful results in the long run.

To mitigate any risk of harm in data collection, enumerators should be trained in trauma-informed approaches and on how to refer respondents to support services confidentially if necessary.<sup>140</sup> Working through representative organisations of men, women and members of the LGBTIQ+ community to identify their needs is a useful way to bridge data gaps and avoid re-traumatising respondents. Representative organisations provide meaningful insights into the ways in which IDPs organise themselves and the strategies they employ to cope with and address their displacement.

Involving IDPs of different genders in research design and data collection is important to improve the inclusiveness and quality of data as well. Useful tools and guidance are emerging to advance the collection, analysis and use of gender-inclusive data.<sup>141</sup> Questions developed by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics could also be incorporated into surveys of IDPs to disaggregate results by disability status and provide an intersectional lens.<sup>142</sup> Data2X's tool for building responsive investments in data for gender equality enables countries to assess their gender data systems and articulate their priorities for investing in and strengthening them.<sup>143</sup>

## Promoting safe sharing

To promote evidence-based decision making and avoid over-researching the same populations, the data that is collected on gender and displacement should be safely shared and publicly available for all to use. The Humanitarian Data Exchange, developed by OCHA's Centre for Humanitarian Data, is an open platform for sharing data across crises and organisations, and brings together data from assessments conducted by governments, UN agencies and humanitarian organisations. The platform currently has 21 datasets on internal displacement that include sex and age-disaggregated data.<sup>144</sup> The Centre for Humanitarian Data also produces guidance on understanding data sensitivity and safe practices for sharing.<sup>145</sup>

## Strengthening partnerships

Strategic partnerships are key to addressing data gaps and fostering knowledge sharing. The CSO and gender data alliance, Data2X, works with partners to improve the production and use of gender data, including on IDPs, through strategic partnerships, research, advocacy and communications.<sup>146</sup> The organisation is also part of the Inclusive Data Charter, a growing global initiative that supports governments and other organisations in taking action and sharing knowledge on inclusive and intersectional data, including on internal displacement.<sup>147</sup>

To advance gender-responsive action on displacement, humanitarians should ensure their project proposals account for any additional costs involved in collecting and analysing disaggregated data and making their interventions fully inclusive. Donors should encourage gender-inclusive data collection, monitoring and reporting, and provide dedicated funding for capacity building and gender-inclusion focal points.

Promoting the meaningful participation of people of all genders in displacement settings, addressing inequalities and barriers, and building inclusive data systems would lay the foundations for more lasting solutions to internal displacement.



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5 See e.g. REACH, Iraq assessment on employment and working conditions of conflict-affected women across key sectors: Final report, November 2019, p.27

6 See e.g. ODI, The impact of displacement on gender roles and relations, March 2019

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9 Ager, A. et al., "Local constructions of gender-based violence amongst IDPs in northern Uganda: analysis of archival data collected using a gender- and age-segmented participatory ranking methodology", *Conflict and Health* 12, 10 (2018), available at: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-018-0140-6>; Workie, K. et al., "Gender-based violence and its associated factors among internally displaced women in Northwest Ethiopia: a cross-sectional study", *BMC Women's Health* 23, 166 (2023), available at: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-023-02306-2>; Qayum, M., Mohmand, S.,

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