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# The 11<sup>th</sup> Dubai International Humanitarian Aid and Development Conference and Exhibition (DIHAD)

Theme: “Women and Aid”

Panel: “Women and War”

Some precise facts and concepts

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# General (mis)perceptions and stereotypes

Women in conflict = helpless, weak

*Only victims of violence*

Femininity = peace

Men in conflict = strong, violent

*Only actors of violence*

Masculinity = war

# Women are not only victims: they are also actors



# General (mis)perceptions of civilian population

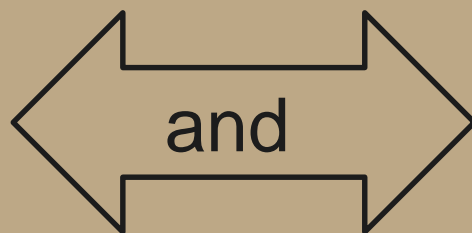
Women  ~~children  
elderly  
infirm~~ Men  civilian

Civilian population  women, men, girls, boys, elderly, infirm  
 (not or no longer taking part in the hostilities)

# Vulnerability - a key (and relative) concept

## Definition

Exposure  
to a given  
problem



Ability to tackle  
it and to its  
impact on the  
group  
concerned

The right question to ask is:  
who is vulnerable to what?

# Are women more vulnerable than men in situations of armed conflict?

The answer is both yes and no

## Women

Majority of:

- Refugee and displaced persons;
- Of family of detained, missing, killed, hidden.
- More likely to be sexually assaulted.

## Men

As potential military and/or political opponents:

- Detention (96% );
- Disappearance (90%) ;
- Summary execution;
- Likely to be wounded and killed as legitimate targets as members of FA or AG.

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**What are women  
specifically vulnerable to  
during armed conflicts  
and violence?**

# To displacement...

- Women and children make up the majority of refugees and IDPs around the world.
- However, they also demonstrate great resiliency as heads of households and breadwinners.
- It is key to increase their capacity to take care of themselves and their families in these difficult situations.





# To the disappearance of their (mainly male) relatives



- The ICRC endeavours to accompany them all along the painful way
- Despite serious challenges, women demonstrate enormous courage and determination...





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# To sexual violence...

- Women and girls are most vulnerable to sexual violence. However, men and boys can also be victims.



# And many women find a way to survive

- ICRC staff endeavors to reach out to women and provide them with appropriate empathic support that is crucial for deploy their strength and to build upon their resilience.



# When detained...



- Female detainees are often the sole providers for their families so their detention also results in great hardship for their loved ones outside.
- However, many women turn their time in detention into an opportunity to acquire new skills.

# The best response

Support women (and men) in employing positive coping mechanisms and prevent them from developing and using negative or harmful ones.

To do this it is necessary to:

1. Gain access to women, men, girls and boys
2. Identify their different but complementary needs
3. Respond accordingly



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Thank you very much