The 11th 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 = elderly, infirm

Children ≠ elderly, infirm

Men ≠ elderly, infirm

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 and 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.
What are women specifically vulnerable to during armed conflicts and violence?
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...
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 deploying 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
Thank you very much