

From conflict and crisis to renewal:
generations of change



Editorial team

The State of World Population 2010

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Cover photo:

Women clearing rubble from the streets of Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

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state of world population 2010

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Foreword

Women rarely wage war, but they too often suffer the worst of its consequences.

Gender-based violence, including rape, is a repugnant and increasingly familiar weapon of war. The immediate toll it takes extends far beyond its direct victims, insidiously tearing apart families and shattering societies for generations to come.

Conflict today is less about soldiers engaging in battle with soldiers on the other side of a national border and more about combatants struggling for control within a single country and employing any means to break the will of civilians—women, girls, men and boys—by disempowering them physically, psychologically, economically, and socially.

In many of today's conflicts, women are disempowered by rape or the threat of it, and by the HIV infection, trauma and disabilities that often result from it. Girls are disempowered when they cannot go to school because of the threat of violence, when they are abducted or trafficked, or when their families disintegrate or must flee. In some conflicts, men are also disempowered by sexual violence. Boys, too, are sometimes exploited or forced to become soldiers.

The State of World Population 2010 explores how conflict and protracted humanitarian emergencies affect women and girls—and men and boys—and shows how many women and young people have overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles and have begun rebuilding their lives and laying the foundation for peace and renewal of their societies.

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is a development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity and that ensures every pregnancy is wanted,

every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV and AIDS and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect. As this report shows, UNFPA supports governments' efforts to empower women and girls—and men and boys—not only those who have been disempowered by conflict, but also those affected by disasters, such as the earthquake that struck Haiti in January 2010. UNFPA also supports civil society organizations, which are essential to the healing process of any community.

While the earthquake in Haiti has garnered extensive media coverage, the crisis in Kyrgyzstan has not, even though the latter resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives and the disruption of tens of thousands more. Yet, in both places, women and youth are facing internal displacement or refugee situations, and their situations are precarious because they cannot access reproductive health care and are more vulnerable to gender-based violence.

This report coincides with the 10th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325, which called on parties to armed conflicts to take measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence and called for greater involvement by women in negotiating and implementing peace agreements. But this report is not only about the resolution. It is also about the special challenges women face in conflict or in humanitarian emergencies and about how women themselves are responding, healing

wounds, moving forward, and not just helping the communities return to the status quo but also building new nations on foundations of equal rights and opportunities.

Resolutions may guide governments' and the international community's response to conflict and establish the framework for actions to protect women and assure their participation in peacebuilding and reconciliation, but they are not a substitute for grassroots efforts to empower women and to build long-term resilience to crises of any sort, whether war, an earthquake or any other catastrophe. Governments need to seize opportunities arising out of post-conflict recovery or emerging from natural disasters to increase the chances that countries are not just rebuilt, but built back better, and renewed, with women and men on equal footing, with rights and opportunities for all and a foundation for development in the long run.

Experience over the past decade underscores the need to tear down the false barriers between crisis, recovery and development. After war or disaster, the humanitarian response must include actions that will sow the seeds for long-term development and peace, so that countries will be better equipped to prevent future outbreaks of violence and to restore normalcy sooner after a catastrophe like the earthquake in Haiti. We must replace a vicious cycle of crisis and underdevelopment with a virtuous one of social and economic progress and empowerment.

The continuum between development and crisis and vice versa makes it clear that whatever is invested in development softens the impact of crisis and natural disaster. The relationship becomes apparent when we compare the impact of recent earthquakes in Haiti and Chile. But



◀ UNFPA Executive Director meets Haitian youth tracking malnutrition among mothers and children through the Gheskio Centre in Port-au-Prince in March 2010.
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it is also true that whatever is invested during the humanitarian response phase can become a solid foundation for rebuilding a society. This continuum moves in both directions.

Experience also shows that gender-based violence does not occur in a vacuum. It is usually a symptom of a larger problem, one of failed institutions, of norms that perpetuate or tolerate abuse, of dangerously skewed gender relations and entrenched inequalities. War and disaster do not cause gender-based violence, but they often exacerbate it or allow it to strike with greater frequency.

Finally, the nature of the international community's response to conflict is changing, with fewer resources devoted to traditional peacekeeping operations and more to development-oriented interventions that lay the foundation for governments to protect civilians from harm and enable them to prosper in the long run. But while governments have the official responsibility to protect their people, communities and individuals must also play a role in promoting peace and security. When all stakeholders are involved, a recovering society is less likely to relapse into chaos and terror after peacekeepers return home.

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid
Executive Director, UNFPA



About this report

Ten years ago, on 31 October 2000, the United Nations Security Council took an important and unprecedented step into new territory. Recognizing the vulnerability of women and girls to violence during and after armed conflict, and the absence or low level of women's representation in efforts to prevent war, build peace and restore devastated societies, the Council passed resolution 1325. The resolution sought formally for the first time in the Security Council to end this

neglect and actively to promote and draw on the untapped potential of women everywhere on issues of peace and security.

The release of the 2010 edition of The State of World Population report coincides with the 10th anniversary of that historic resolution. The report highlights how women in conflict and post-conflict situations—as well as in emergencies or protracted crises—are faring a decade later.

The 2010 report is different from previous editions, which took an academic approach to topics related to the mandate and work of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. The current report takes a more journalistic approach, drawing on the experiences of women and girls, men and boys, living in the wake of conflict and other catastrophic disruptions. They speak for themselves about the challenges they face, the ways their communities are coping and becoming more resilient and about how many of them have become involved in reconstruction and renewal. The individuals featured in the report are neither statisticians nor demographers. They are rural people

living off the land and urbanites trying to survive in broken cities. Many survivors of conflict and natural disasters are now working in their communities to help fellow citizens recover and readjust.

Globally, there is a growing roster of non-governmental organizations and community activists working in partnership with governments, United Nations agencies, donor countries and foundations. In the mix are also traditional elders and religious leaders who strive to comfort the suffering and bring decimated societies back to their cultural roots and principles, so often warped by war, refugee flight, occupation and natural disasters. Local initiatives are healing wounds while rethinking old habits and rules of behaviour for a new age.

While the Security Council was passing resolution 1325 in 2000 and several others on the protection of women in the years that followed, activities were already taking place on the ground in countries where victims of conflict and disaster were frequently not even aware they had moved into the Security Council's spotlight. They just knew from

◀ *Liberian women demonstrate in Monrovia, Liberia, at the height of the civil war in 2003. Image from the film, Pray the Devil Back to Hell.*
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1 UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Resolution 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security, was the first to address the impact of conflict on women during and in the aftermath of armed conflicts. The resolution called on all parties to an armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse.

Resolution 1820 (2008) was the first to exclusively address sexual violence in armed conflicts. The resolution recognized sexual violence as a security issue, noting that the perpetration of sexual violence as a tactic of war against civilians was a threat to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Resolution 1888 (2009) was a follow-up resolution to resolution 1820, emphasizing the importance both of addressing issues of sexual violence from the very outset of a peace process and of bringing perpetrators to justice. The resolution called for the inclusion of specific provisions for the protection of women and children in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and United Nations-sponsored peace negotiations. The Security Council emphasized the importance of addressing sexual violence issues from the outset of peace processes and mediation efforts, to protect populations at risk and promote full stability, particularly in the areas of pre-ceasefire humanitarian access and human rights agreements, ceasefires, disarmament,

demobilization and reintegration and security-sector reform.

Resolution 1889 (2009) reaffirmed the Security Council's commitment to the continuing and full implementation, in a mutually reinforcing manner, of resolutions 1325, 1820 and 1888, as well as related resolutions: 1612 (2005), 1674 (2006), and 1882 (2009). The Council expressed its continued deep concern about the persistent obstacles to women's full involvement in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and their participation in post-conflict public life. It recognized that the marginalization of women can delay or undermine the achievement of durable peace, security and reconciliation.

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in the women and children
protection centre of the
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