



The Women Peace and Security Index: A new lens on forced displacement

Introduction

The Women Peace and Security (WPS) Index, published by Georgetown University's Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) and the PRIO Centre on Gender, Peace and Security (PRIO GPS) draws on recognized data sources to measure and rank women's inclusion, justice, and security across 11 indicators in 170 countries. This year, Norway, Finland, and Iceland lead the rankings, while Afghanistan, Syria and Yemen are at the bottom.

With the population of forcibly displaced approaching 90 million and at an all-time high, the WPS Index methodology has been adapted and applied to systematically measure the situation of forcibly displaced women. The results for five African countries – Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan – found that displaced women experience an average disadvantage of about 24 percent compared to host community women. Displaced women faced greater economic marginalisation and financial exclusion, and often felt less free to move about. And they generally faced much higher risks than host community women of intimate partner violence at home, rising as high as 42 percent in South Sudan.

Three years ago, the international community established the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) – a multi sector 'programme of action' to support countries hosting large numbers of refugees and build refugee self-reliance.¹ This briefing by GIWPS and the International Rescue Committee uncovers some of the factors that compound gender discrimination and deepen displaced women's marginalisation, compromising their access to inclusion, justice, and security and the overall success of the GCR. It summarises the forced displacement WPS index findings demonstrating the GCR ambition has not been achieved for women and girls and points to policy and programme approaches to addressing the challenges identified, defining targeted recommendations on page 10 for stakeholders to progress justice, safety and inclusion for displaced women and girls who are at real risk of being left behind.

Image: IRC. Zainab Bare is a Somali refugee living in Helowyn camp in Ethiopia. She's part of the Women Steering Committee where she helps run services that raise awareness about women's rights and safe spaces.

The global displacement context

The number of displaced people has continued to rise, approaching 90 million at the end of 2020. More than half remained in their own country as internally displaced persons (IDPs).² Nearly all IDPs (99 percent) live in low- and middle-income countries.³

About two-thirds of refugees come from four countries – Afghanistan, South Sudan, Syria, and Venezuela – with Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Myanmar, Somalia, and Sudan accounting for another 20 percent. Notably, 7 of these 10 countries rank among the bottom 15 on the WPS Index, highlighting how women's inclusion, justice, and security are significantly constrained in the countries refugees have been forced to leave.

Constructing the forcibly displaced WPS index

The global Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Index ranks 170 countries in terms of women's inclusion, justice, and security, but does not capture variation within national borders. In the 2021 report, GIWPS introduced an innovative application that constructs separate indices for forcibly displaced and nondisplaced women in five Sub-Saharan countries: Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan.⁴ The results underscore the compounding effects of displacement on women's status and opportunities.

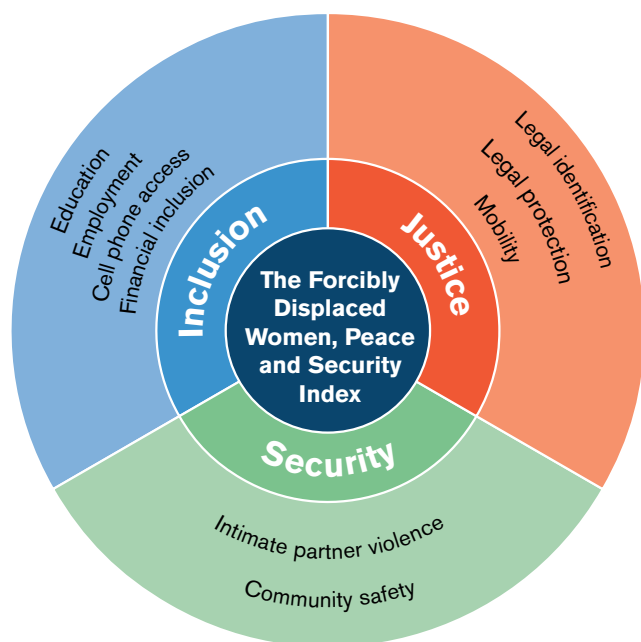
The forcibly displaced WPS index captures inclusion, justice, and security across 9 equally-weighted indicators, as illustrated in Figure 1. Definitions of these indicators are available in Annex 1, table 2.

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Figure 1: Indicators for the forcibly displaced WPS Index



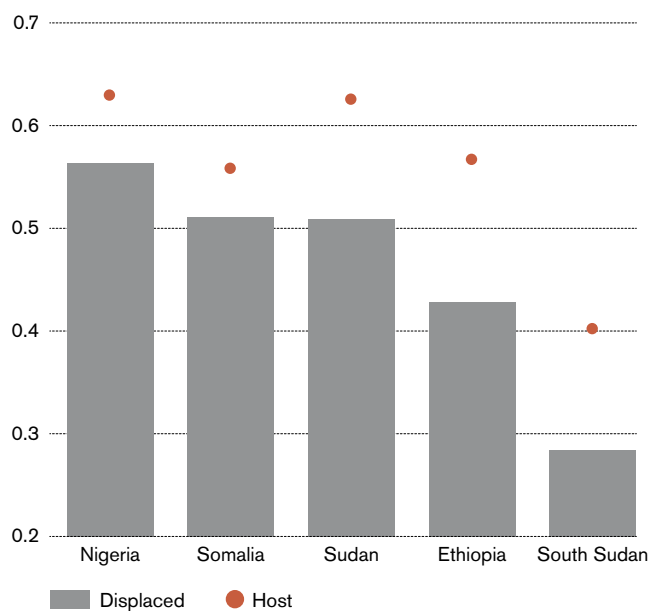
It should be noted that our data predate the Covid-19 pandemic, which, emerging evidence suggests, is compounding the disadvantages facing displaced women, who face the triple challenges of gender inequality, displacement, and Covid-19 impacts.⁵ Moreover, not all data were available for all countries. For Ethiopia and South Sudan, for example, no financial inclusion data were available.

The negative impact of displacement on women’s inclusion, justice, and security – what the WPS Index shows

In all five countries, WPS Index scores for displaced women were worse than for host country women (Figure 2), with an average disadvantage of about 24 percent. Displaced women generally faced much higher risks than host country women of violence at home, were consistently less likely to be financially included, and often felt less free to move about.

The countries with the greatest WPS Index score disparities between host country and displaced women – Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Sudan – are also the countries with the widest multidimensional poverty gaps between host country and displaced populations.⁶ In all five countries, female-headed refugee/IDP households were also more likely than male-headed households to be poor, showing how gender inequality compounds the effects of displacement and poverty. In Ethiopia, 58 percent of female-headed refugee households were impoverished, compared with 19 percent of male-headed refugee households.⁷ Lack of physical safety, early marriage, and lack of legal identification were the largest contributors to poverty in households headed by displaced women.

Figure 2: WPS Index scores for displaced and host women



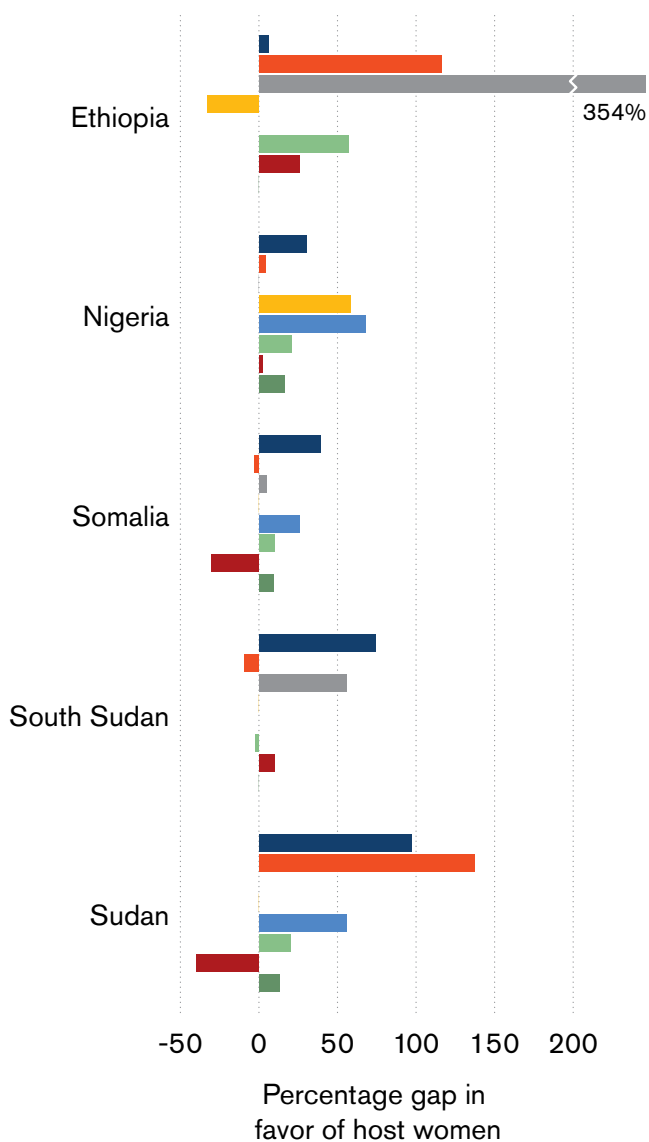
Source: GIWPS and PRIO 2021.

Across all five countries, displaced women fared systematically worse than host country women, albeit to varying extents, on financial inclusion and intimate partner violence (Figure 3). The gaps between refugee and host country women’s rates of financial inclusion exceeded 15 percentage points in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Somalia, compared with 4 percentage points in Sudan.⁸

In Ethiopia and Sudan, the share of displaced women who felt unsafe in their neighbourhood at night was more than double that of host community women, and the mobility gap was almost four-fold in Ethiopia.

Interestingly, the situation was worse for host country women on some fronts – including legal identification in Ethiopia and paid employment in Somalia and Sudan. The results underline the importance of country specific data and diagnostics. For a snapshot of each country, please see Box 1 on page 6.

Figure 3: Gaps between displaced women and host community women



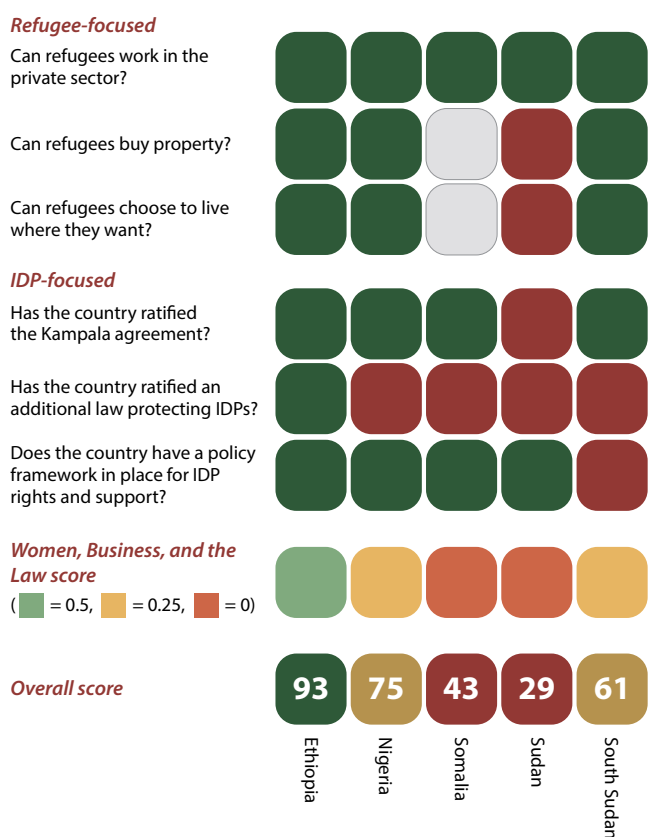
- Current intimate partner violence
- Community safety
- Mobility
- Legal identification
- Financial inclusion
- Cellphone access
- Employment
- Education

Source: GIWPS and PRIO 2021.

Legal rights and protection

To capture the legal situation of displaced women, we combined seven elements, equally weighted, to generate the indicator. Figure 4 outlines the main components, and more details on the methodology are available in Annex 1. Scores out of seven were translated into summary percentages to factor into index scores. Ethiopia has the highest score, 93 percent, and Sudan has the lowest, 29 percent. Since these scores are national, they do not differentiate by gender, but do provide insight into displaced women’s legal setting.

Figure 4: Legal protections for refugees and internally displaced persons vary greatly across the five countries



Legend: Yes No Missing data

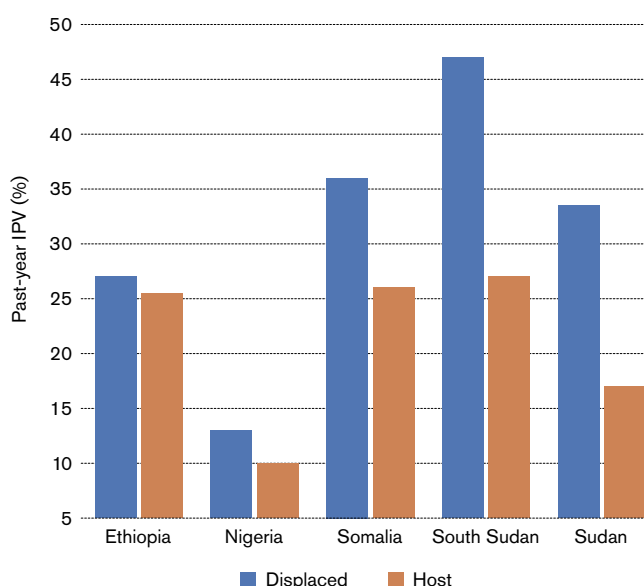
Source: GIWPS and PRIO 2021.

Our justice dimension results reveal that the five countries generally had good laws on paper protecting internally displaced persons and refugees. All the countries in our sample, except Sudan, have ratified the Kampala Agreement, a regional commitment to protecting IDP rights, and all countries except South Sudan had published a national action plan on IDPs, signalling commitment to protecting their rights. However, as outlined below, these legal protections do not always provide protections from violence and insecurity or economic inclusion in practice.

Violence and insecurity

The security dimension results highlight the heightened insecurity faced by displaced women. In all five countries, levels of current intimate partner violence were higher among displaced women than among women in the host population (Figure 5). In Somalia, displaced women experienced intimate partner violence at a rate nearly 30 percent higher than host country women (36 percent versus 26 percent), and in South Sudan, nearly half (47 percent) of displaced women had experienced intimate partner violence in the past year – a rate nearly double the national average of 27 percent and quadruple the global average of about 12 percent.

Figure 5: Displaced women face higher risks of intimate partner violence



Source: Ethiopia (Feseha and Gerbaba, 2012); Nigeria (Ekhatior-Mobayode et al., 2020); Somalia (Wirtz et al., 2018); South Sudan (Ellsberg et al., 2020); Sudan (Ali et al., 2014; WHO 2021). Data for Nigeria show IPV rates in conflict affected vs. non-conflict affected areas.

These results are consistent with accumulating evidence – from settings ranging from Colombia⁹ to Democratic Republic of the Congo,¹⁰ Liberia, Mali,¹¹ and Nigeria¹² – documenting how displacement and instability significantly increase women’s risk of intimate partner violence. A recent study from Democratic Republic of the Congo found that both former and current displacement significantly worsened women’s risk of intimate partner violence and rape in the past year compared to host women.¹³ Displaced women in Colombia and Liberia had between 40 and 55 percent greater odds of experiencing past-year intimate partner violence than their nondisplaced counterparts.¹⁴ A quasi-experimental study in Mali comparing pre and during-conflict measures, found that women living in conflict-affected areas were significantly more likely to experience multiple forms of intimate partner violence, compared to women living in areas not affected by conflict.¹⁵ These studies highlight the important linkages between violence at the community level and violence within the home.

In Nigeria and Somalia, displaced and host country women had similarly high levels of perceived safety, with only five to eight percent reporting feeling unsafe in their neighbourhood at night. This contrasts with Ethiopia, where about one in four displaced women felt unsafe in their neighbourhood, more than double the rates for displaced men, host country men, and host country women, suggesting that gender inequality and displacement can intersect to threaten women’s safety.

By contrast, displaced women in South Sudan were less likely to feel unsafe than host country women, though rates were extremely high for both groups at 78 percent for displaced women and 86 percent for host country women. Interestingly, gender gaps on this indicator in South Sudan were relatively small, with both displaced and host country men reporting rates within 2 percentage points of women’s rates, suggesting a pervasive sense of insecurity. The somewhat higher sense of safety among displaced women may be due to residence in camps, which could provide protection and security amid the ongoing conflict.

In Ethiopia, only about 1 in 5 refugee women felt free to move where they chose, compared with 94 percent of displaced women in Nigeria and 86 percent of those in Somalia. Ethiopia’s low score on mobility contrasts with its high score on legal protection (93 percent), pointing to gaps between protection in principle and rights in practice.

With continued lockdowns and shelter-in-place orders, Covid-19 has only increased risks of gender-based violence. An IRC safety audit conducted in 2020 across 15 countries in Africa, with women from refugee, displaced and post conflict settings, found that a number of factors – including movement restrictions, economic hardship, and school closures – exposed women and girls to greater risk of violence and exploitation, both inside and outside the home. For example, the closure of schools and limited access to remote learning opportunities left adolescent girls at risk of sexual exploitation, early pregnancy, and forced marriages. Increased need for water collection due to changing hygiene practices exposed women and girls to additional risks of sexual exploitation at water collection sites. Marginalized women, particularly women living with a disability and older women, were at particular risk of confinement with an abuser.¹⁶

Economic inclusion

The gender gaps facing displaced women were greatest for employment (Figure 6). Across all five countries, employment rates for displaced men were at least 90 percent higher than for displaced women, peaking at almost 150 percent in Nigeria, where about 36 percent of displaced men were employed, compared with about 15 percent of displaced women. The gaps reflect the broader fact that labour markets around the world remain highly segregated by gender – with women more concentrated in unskilled and low-paid sectors than men, which also tends to make it hard for refugee women to find a job. Other obstacles

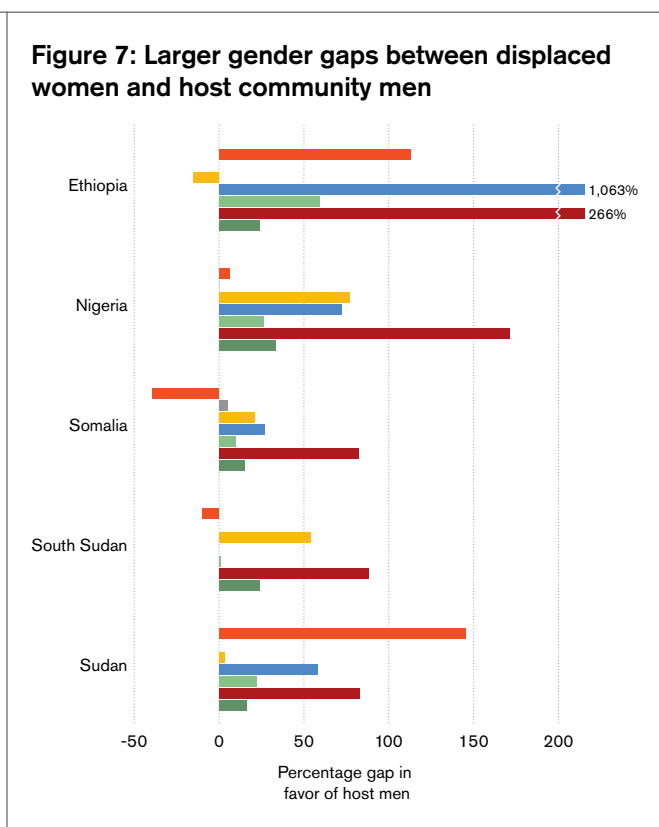
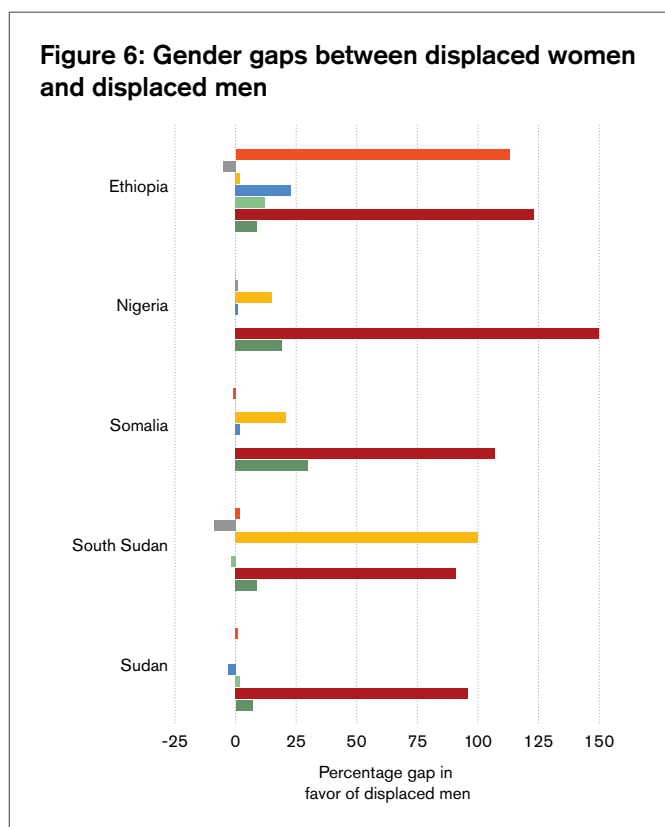
such as language barriers, lower literacy rates, unpaid care responsibilities, and gender norms that limit women's mobility can compound constraints on refugee women's economic opportunities.¹⁷

Comparisons between displaced women and host country men exposed even starker gaps, highlighting the cumulative effects of displacement and gender inequality (Figure 7). In Ethiopia, for example, almost three times the share of host country men were employed compared to the share of refugee women. The results suggest that even in countries where displaced women are legally permitted to work (the case for all five countries in our analysis), many faced discriminatory norms and regulatory barriers.

Financial inclusion disparities between displaced women and host men were significantly wider than those

between displaced women and men, again showing how displacement compounds gender inequality. In Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, and Sudan, differences in financial inclusion between displaced men and women were within two percentage points of each other but ranged from around two percent in Ethiopia to 59 percent in Somalia. Between displaced women and host men, gaps ranged as high as 1,063 percent in Ethiopia and surpassed 50 percent in Nigeria and Sudan.

These impediments affect the economy at large. For example, estimates from earlier research by the Georgetown Institute on Women, Peace, and Security and the International Rescue Committee suggest that if employment and earnings gender gaps were closed in the top 30 refugee-hosting countries, refugee women could generate \$1.4 trillion a year in global GDP.¹⁸



■ Current intimate partner violence
 ■ Community safety
 ■ Mobility
 ■ Legal identification
 ■ Financial inclusion
■ Cellphone access
 ■ Employment
 ■ Education

Source: GIWPS and PRIO 2021.

Research by the International Rescue Committee and the Overseas Development Institute also finds displacement exacerbated the negative impact of the pandemic on economic opportunities. In Jordan and Nigeria, 83 percent of displaced women stated that their economic situation had worsened, compared to 73 percent of women in the host community. In both countries, more displaced men reported a worse economic situation (86 percent) than their male host community

counterparts (68 percent). The high rates of women with a worsening economic situation can in part be explained by the increased burden during the pandemic. In Greece and Jordan, more women than men (Greece: 20 versus 8 percent; Jordan: 36 percent versus none), as well as more displaced women than host community women (29 versus 10 percent across both countries), cited personal and household responsibilities as challenges to finding employment.¹⁹

Box 1: Country highlights

South Sudan

South Sudan ranks third worst on the global WPS index, highlighting the low overall status of women in the country. Disparities between forcibly displaced and host country women were the greatest among the five-country sample, with displaced women scoring about 42 percent worse than host country women. Displaced and host women had similar access to education (6.8 years) and legal identification (26 percent), but had starkly different risks of violence. Just over a quarter (27 percent) of host community women had experienced IPV in the past year, compared to 47 percent of displaced women, a rate higher than any country in the world. The poor performance for both forcibly displaced and host country women underline the scale of deprivations in this conflict-affected country.

Ethiopia

Differences in Ethiopia between displaced and host country women were also wide – around 33 percent. Very few displaced women were financially included – only around 2 percent, the lowest in our five-country sample and around 25 times less than the rate of host country men and women. Of the five countries assessed, Ethiopia scores highest on legal protections for displaced persons and has passed legislation upholding refugee and IDP rights. In 2019, for example, Ethiopia passed a law allowing refugees to work and open bank accounts. However, implementation has been delayed and the mobile money market is nascent, highlighting gaps between laws and practice.

Only one in five refugee women felt free to move where she chooses, and 26 percent felt unsafe walking in their neighbourhood at night, more than double the share for host country women, highlighting the severe barriers to mobility and security.

Interestingly, refugee women in Ethiopia were more likely to have a form of legal identification than host country women (54 versus 36 percent). This could be linked to a national policy introduced in 2017 that allows refugees to obtain birth, death, and marriage certificates.²⁰ UNHCR's ongoing programming also aims to help refugees obtain digital identification – as of April 2019, approximately 500,000 refugees in Ethiopia had been registered this way.

Somalia

We found the smallest gap in WPS Index scores in Somalia, where displaced women were about 9 percent worse off than host country women. Both groups had similarly low rates of access to legal identification (14 percent) due to protracted conflict and poor government administration, fewer than 1 in 10 births in the country were registered, and there was no national system for identification. Additional reasons reported for not having legal identification in Somalia included lack of trust in the government, the absence of legal protections for personal data, and high costs.²¹ Displaced and nondisplaced women in Somalia also had similar rates of employment, mobility, and community safety, with gaps of less than 5 percentage points.

Nigeria

In Nigeria, the gaps between displaced and host women amounted to about 12 percent, with relatively large disparities in cell phone access (11 percentage points in favour of host country women) and legal identification (15 percentage points), while rates of employment and mobility were similar. Gender gaps were small for cell phone access, financial inclusion, mobility, and community safety, but wide for employment, concurring with other analysis finding wide gender gaps in employment in northeast Nigeria for both displaced and nondisplaced populations. In data collected by the International Rescue Committee and the Overseas Development Institute in 2021, 43 percent of displaced women in Nigeria lost income during the Covid-19 pandemic, while 29 percent reported having to give their earned money to their husband or encountering other controlling behaviours.²²

Sudan

Host community women in Sudan scored 23 percent higher than displaced women on the index. Gaps were most marked in the security dimension, where 34 percent of displaced women had experienced past-year intimate partner violence compared to 17 percent of host community women, and where 34 percent of displaced women reported feeling unsafe in their neighbourhood compared to 15 percent of host community women. Displaced and host women scored similarly on mean years of schooling (7-8 years) and on legal ID access (90 percent), both of which are the highest values for any group across the five-country sample. Despite strong performance in these areas, rates of financial inclusion (7 percent for displaced women and 11 percent for host women) were among the lowest in the sample. These mixed results underline the importance of multidimensionally measuring and comparing displaced and host women's status in order to paint a more complete picture of where action is needed.

Policy and programme responses

The results of the forcibly displaced index highlight the policy importance of comprehensive, intersectional approaches to women's empowerment, particularly in humanitarian and crisis contexts, that recognise how forced displacement, geographic location, race, ethnicity, and other characteristics interact to affect women's safety, experiences, and opportunities. Such approaches are essential to an inclusive recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The gendered displacement gaps point to the need for targeted support specifically for displaced women's safety and economic opportunities, in line with the ambition of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). Progress has been made on the GCR agenda since 2018, including increased development assistance funding to refugee hosting countries, enhanced legal protections, and strengthened access to education.²³ It is nonetheless clear that future efforts should more explicitly prioritise the gendered dimensions of forced displacement expanding the focus from gender sensitive investments and programming to those approaches that support a transformation of gender discriminatory social norms and support disaggregated data collection to track progress for women and other marginalised groups.

Addressing heightened risk of violence

Most countries have laws in place prohibiting intimate partner violence. Yet, reporting on intimate partner violence (IPV) remains highly taboo and access to justice limited in many displacement settings. Moreover, the prevalence of this type of abuse remains high and even worse among displaced women. International efforts to date have largely focused on wartime rape and sexual violence perpetrated by individuals outside of the home. This focus hides the fact that levels of IPV in the home are much higher.²⁴ Evidence from the flagship What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls programme recorded 73% of women in Rumbek, South Sudan, had experienced IPV in their lifetimes.²⁵

However, governments have rarely introduced policies and interventions designed to reduce the risk of violence against displaced women and girls.²⁶ And where policies were in place, resources may be inadequate. For example, the Government of Bangladesh deployed only 20 female police officers, to respond to violence against women and girls, in the Rohingya refugee camps, which have a population of more than 880,000 in South Bangladesh.²⁷ IPV remains the most common form of reported violence in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh – according to data from 2020 and 2021, 95 percent of reported gender-based violence (GBV) incidents involved IPV.²⁸

Acknowledging the many forms of GBV women face – both from partners and non-partners – will be critical to providing effective services to displaced women. A range of interventions that have been introduced, both standalone programmes addressing violence and programmes integrated into other sectors, such as livelihoods, health and education, working to prevent and mitigate GBV. These include safe spaces,

livelihood programming and training, psychosocial support, batterer interventions, home visitations, community mobilization, and/or cash and voucher transfers.

Women and girls' safe spaces (WGSS) are now among the most widely implemented GBV prevention and response interventions, seeking to provide: physical safety; access to various GBV response services; opportunity for women and girls to re-build social networks; psychosocial support; and targeted skill-building. Programs in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda that provided safe spaces for girls and offered skill trainings have been found to boost financial literacy, self-esteem, and decision-making power, though some results were mixed.²⁹

Cash transfer programmes can also be designed to build resilience to GBV. For example, IRC's cash transfer programmes in Jordan that combined meeting basic needs through cash with targeted protection services helped reduce risks of IPV and offer sustained protection beyond the duration of the transfer.³⁰ Box 2 highlights two promising innovations for GBV services in displacement settings.

BOX 2: Promising innovations: mobile and remote GBV services

One promising innovation has been the use of mobile services. In Lebanon, where many Syrian refugees live in urban settings, the delivery in fixed safe spaces was shifted to a roving team delivering services to vulnerable women where they were living. The services provided included psychosocial support, awareness sessions, parenting skills, information dissemination, vocational training, and referral to specialized services – including legal and birth registration and life skills. A 2018 evaluation found that this boosted access to essential services, and a higher level of engagement of women in the activities, because children would, at the same time, participate in the mobile child-friendly spaces.³¹ The shared experience was also found to create a stronger sense of community among women living in the same area, and the delivery costs were cheaper due to savings on rent.

Covid-19 has led to innovative responses in displacement settings, particularly around remote GBV services. In Jordan, for example, designated phone booths have been transformed into safe spaces where survivors of abuse can call GBV case workers, offering a discreet and convenient pathway to support.³² A 2021 report from the IRC documented innovative practices in Cameroon, South Sudan, and Yemen. These include, for example, the development or scaling up of effective mobile services, as well as the shift to remote calls, which in Cameroon for example led to increased engagement between the country's GBV humanitarian services. It is anticipated that many of these innovations will remain even as the threat of Covid-19 recedes.³³

Enhancing economic inclusion

Results from the index show that gender and displacement have compounding discriminatory impacts on the economic and financial inclusion of displaced women. These impacts are reinforced by regulatory and practical barriers to economic opportunities. Even where refugees are permitted by law to work in the private sector – as is the case for all five countries – there remain barriers in practice to access decent work, which are more challenging for women. UNHCR's latest Global Compact for Refugees Indicator Report shows that while 75 percent of refugees have access in law to key attributes of decent work, only two-thirds are allowed to move freely, and much fewer enjoy these rights in practice,³⁴ due to, for example, limitations on permitted employment sectors, quotas and prohibitive fees for work permits.³⁵

The financial inclusion gaps illustrated by the index impact on displaced women's ability to accumulate savings, recover faster from inevitable shocks and pursue employment. Barriers to vital financial services include onerous identity requirements, discrimination and complex bureaucratic procedures.³⁶

The pandemic and associated lockdowns have deepened these pre-existing labour market inequalities. Gender segregated formal employment sectors with an overrepresentation of women were disproportionately impacted.³⁷ This global trend was matched among refugees in high refugee hosting countries with one study showing refugee women were more likely to be employed in highly impacted sectors than refugee men in five out of the seven countries assessed.³⁸

Legal and practical barriers to the formal labour market mean that displaced people overwhelmingly rely on informal work, with women more exposed to informality than men and often in more vulnerable situations.³⁹ Women refugees and migrants employed informally rely on this work for their survival and do not benefit from income replacement schemes, social safety nets or savings. The high rates of poverty among refugee female headed households, as discussed in the index findings above, were thought to be heightened by the pandemic, with especially high risks for these households⁴⁰ and in turn increasing risks of abuse in dangerous and exploitative work.⁴¹

Refugee women faced with such economic hardship cannot always depend on government social protection payments, because such systems sometimes exclude displaced people from local registries. Some may be limited to citizens only while others have practical exclusions.⁴² For example, emerging research findings in Greece suggests that refugees are either unaware of social protection programs, or face significant entry barriers to access – because they lack a social security number, a tax registration number or a bank account – prerequisites for registration for state benefits programs – and very few refugees interviewed were receiving any form of state benefit.⁴³

In addition to regulatory barriers, deeply entrenched gender norms, discrimination, and social stigma can constrain economic opportunities. For example, displaced women surveyed by the IRC in Niger, Kenya and Germany cited challenges accessing childcare and balancing sole responsibility for unpaid care work as a barrier to economic opportunities. Social isolation and limited social and economic networks were also found to compromise their economic inclusion as well as overall wellbeing. Lack of access to information about training, market, and labour market opportunities was also identified as a challenge.⁴⁴ Another example from an ongoing study in Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, and Uganda found that improving economic outcomes for displaced women depended not only on the provision and access to financial services but required interventions that focus on gender transformation, by creating opportunities and safe spaces to intentionally train men and women in understanding gender roles, norms that allow for women's economic decision making and rights.⁴⁵

Local women's rights organisations are critical partners in addressing discriminatory gender norms as well as providing key links to local communities, and establishing interpersonal networks for displaced women that will help access information and resources.⁴⁶ Women's rights organisations are well-placed to design and deliver comprehensive and transformative interventions for women's economic empowerment.⁴⁷

Addressing the multiple inequalities and discrimination faced by displaced women calls for coherent policy and programming, by governments, bilateral agencies, and multilateral organisations. This includes improving national policies to make them refugee inclusive as well as gender equal. For example, national social protection should include displaced people, and eligibility criteria should be reviewed in light of what is known about the profile of disadvantaged, displaced individuals and families, including the shape of gender inequalities. While governments work to improve national systems, humanitarian responses such as cash programmes can be designed to fill gaps to ensure basic needs are met.⁴⁸

Gender-transformative programmatic approaches should not only include skills building and access to quality labour market opportunities or credit, but also support unpaid care, enhance access to affordable childcare, and include social norm change to increase women's control over resources and address stigma and discrimination. Sexual and reproductive health services, as well as prevention and response of gender-based and intimate partner violence are likewise crucial. A multi-year programme duration is paramount to achieving related behavioural and social norms changes that are prerequisite for women to access non-traditional sectors and jobs safely and to be able to control and manage their own personal and household finances.⁴⁹

Importance of data and measurement, and participation of displaced women

Policy and program design needs to be informed by the lived experiences of women and girls. Learning from qualitative information from displaced groups, and including the voices of displaced women, especially those facing multiple disadvantages is key as they are best placed to understand and represent their needs and demands.⁵⁰ However, both quantitative and qualitative data on the gendered impacts of forced displacement are often lacking. This is manifest in the new UNHCR Indicator report on the GCR, which provides very limited gender-disaggregated data and none on economic inclusion indicators.⁵¹

Even basic data is lacking – like the age and sex of displaced people. Sex- and age-disaggregated stock figures are currently lacking for 20 per cent of the global refugee population, rising to 34 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and up to 80 percent for refugees in countries in the Americas.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, DRC, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Peru are the only countries that fully disaggregate IDP data by sex for disaster and conflict-driven displacement. Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Georgia, Mali and Nigeria disaggregate in cases of conflict related displacement only. All other countries disaggregate by sex only partially or not at all.⁵²

Currently the absence of good data on women affected by crisis and displacement, as well as their involvement in the development of policy and programming is a leading to shortcomings in responses. Women's rights organisations have a key role to play in representing the inputs, voices and perspectives of displaced women including by generating information and data.

Women's rights organisations (WROs) are frontline responders who are already responding to the needs of displaced women and girls in their communities. A recent report from the IRC – looking at response to GBV across Cameroon, South Sudan, and Yemen – showed that WROs are a key source of information regarding the needs of women and girls. However, WROs are overlooked and underfunded when it matters most. These organisations lack direct access to donors and face steep barriers in accessing sustainable sources of funding.⁵³

Policy coherence

Comprehensive policy and programming responses require policy coherence between different frameworks aiming to advance key issues related to the Women peace and security agenda. Too often these initiatives are siloed. UN Women's Generation Equality Forum (GEF) that resulted in a five-year Global Acceleration Plan (GAP)⁵⁴ laying out priority actions for achieving gender equality, failed to acknowledge displacement as a key component of intersectionality. Separately, a 'Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Compact'⁵⁵, aimed at securing progress on existing global commitments under the WPS agenda and gender-responsive humanitarian action, was launched at the Forum but was not referenced by the GAP⁵⁶. This undermines the overall potential of these recent initiatives to advance progress on the ground.

Commitments made at the GEF are also separate from those made in the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, which included commitments for displaced women's self-reliance, access to financial services and GBV. The latest UNHCR Indicator Report analysing progress for displaced populations since 2018 doesn't include gender disaggregated data on self-reliance and livelihoods, nor on violence against women.

Recommendations

Three years since the adoption of the GCR, forcibly displaced women and girls are still left behind. Urgent progress is needed to implement commitments on self-reliance, financial inclusion and protection from violence.

An overarching recommendation is the need to ensure that programmes and policies simultaneously address the effects of multiple intersecting inequalities and discrimination faced by women affected by displacement, to ensure that their needs and priorities are addressed holistically.

The international community must show stronger support for the GCR and urgently prioritise, empower and protect displaced women and girls, monitor and report data disaggregated by gender, in addition to age and diversity. We recommend in particular:

Host governments

Take concrete steps to review and, where necessary, revise national laws and policies to achieve gender equality and enhance economic inclusion for forcibly displaced populations, including measures to:

- Increase free movement and access to labour markets and financial services.
- Expand inclusive social protection to people affected by crisis and displacement.
- Provide safe, affordable and accessible care services, notably quality childcare provision.

Public and private donors and multilateral stakeholders

- Direct more multi-year, flexible funding to frontline responders in fragile and conflict-affected contexts including via local, national and international NGOs and women's rights organisations – including women-led workers' organisations and women led businesses.
- Direct more multi-year, flexible funding towards investments and programming that focus on comprehensive and gender transformative interventions, products and services to complement programming focused on increased access.
- Support the use of indicators that women themselves identify as important to track progress on investments.
- Take steps to increase coherence between relevant key policy frameworks, including across gender, development, women, peace and security, humanitarian and economic development policy – for example via better linkages between humanitarian cash transfer programs and social protection systems.

Agencies collecting survey data, including the World Bank, UN Agencies, Joint Data Centre on Forced Displacement and Demographic Health Survey (DHS)

- Include forcibly displaced populations in population wide and household-based data collection, especially in countries where there are significant numbers of displaced people. Large samples with adequate representation of forcibly displaced women and girls are needed to underpin research on social and economic characteristics across the life course.
- Collect individual level data disaggregated by gender, age and displacement status, including about labour market participation, hours of paid work (and ideally unpaid work), earnings and transfers as well as other relevant indicators defined by displaced women themselves.
- Collect longitudinal and panel data on displaced communities and hosts to enable tracking of trends over time, and better understanding of drivers.

Annex 1 – Background on the Displacement WPS Index

Country coverage: We constructed WPS indices for five African countries characterized by high levels of displacement: Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan.

Table 1: Number of displaced persons and their share of the population in five African countries, 2020

Country	Number of displaced persons	Share of population (%)
Ethiopia	800,464	1.0
Nigeria	2,610,278	1.3
Somalia	2,967,500	19.2
South Sudan	1,600,254	14.5
Sudan	2,552,174	6.0

Note: For Ethiopia, figures cover refugees only; for other countries, IDPs only. Source: UNHCR 2020b; World Bank Open Data.

Data: The World Bank's new High Frequency Surveys allow estimating the WPS Index separately for displaced and nondisplaced women in those five countries – namely, the Ethiopia Skills Profile Survey (2017), covering refugees from four countries living in Ethiopia in camps and host communities in surrounding areas; the Nigeria IDP Survey (2018), covering IDPs and host communities in the northeastern states of the country; the Somalia High Frequency Survey (2017), covering internally displaced and host communities nationwide; South Sudan's High Frequency Survey Wave 4 (2017), covering IDP and host communities in urban areas of seven states; and the Sudan IDP Profiling Survey (2018), covering IDPs living in the Abu Shouk and El Salam camps in Darfur and in host communities around Al Fashir.⁵⁷ The newly available data from these surveys allow tracking the impacts of conflict and displacement and can inform better design of policy and programmatic responses. Most data come from high frequency surveys carried out by the World Bank, that were designed to cover IDP communities, while the data on intimate partner violence and legal discrimination were drawn from other published sources.⁵⁸

Data caveats: Our data predate the Covid-19 pandemic, which is compounding the disadvantages facing displaced women, who face the triple challenges of gender inequality, displacement, and Covid-19 impacts.⁵⁹ Moreover, not all data were available for all countries. For Sudan, we had only national rates of intimate partner violence and mobility.⁶⁰ For Ethiopia and South Sudan, no financial inclusion data were available.

Table 2: Indicators and definitions for the forcibly displaced WPS index

Dimension and indicator	Definition
Inclusion	
Education	Women's mean years of schooling
Employment	Percentage of women who worked for money for at least one hour in the seven days preceding data collection
Cell phone access	Percentage of women who live in a household where at least one person has a cellphone
Financial inclusion	Percentage of women whose household has access to a bank account or a mobile money account
Justice	
Legal identification	Percentage of women who have a legal form of identification
Legal protection	Summary score based on whether the country provides the seven legal protections for displaced persons shown in Figure 4
Mobility	Percentage of women who feel free to move where they choose
Security	
Intimate partner violence	Percentage of women who experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner in the 12 months preceding data collection
Community safety	Percentage of women who feel moderately or very unsafe when walking alone in their neighborhood after dark

Source: GIWPS and PRIO 2021.

Displacement index legal protection indicator

To capture the legal situation of displaced women, we combined seven elements, equally weighted, to generate the associated indicator. The right to work in the private sector, to own property, and to choose residential location were adopted from the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD) Migration and the Law database.⁶¹ For IDP-specific aspects, we counted whether the host country has ratified the Kampala Convention,⁶² whether national legislation protects IDPs, and whether there is a national policy addressing IDP-related issues. To capture gender discrimination in national law, we used the absence of legal discrimination against women as measured by the Women, Business, and the Law score and incorporated in the global WPS Index.

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