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Preventing Individual-Level Violence in Conflict Settings

As humanitarian crises increase in frequency and protraction, their impacts have become more widespread and long-lasting. From loss of livelihoods, weakening of infrastructure, and backsliding on development gains, to heightened tensions between groups, increased competition for resources, and displacement, these crises can change the physical, social, political, and economic landscapes of communities for generations.

Though crises often impact all members of a community, marginalized and vulnerable populations are generally the hardest hit. As these groups recover, they often have access to fewer resources and experience higher rates of violence during and after crises. In particular, gender-based violence (GBV), intimate partner violence (IPV), and violence against children (VAC) have been shown to significantly increase in humanitarian crises ([Calkbush et al., 2017](#)). This is especially acute in conflict-affected settings where women, adolescents, and children may experience violence perpetrated by combatants as well as people they know, such as their partners, parents, and other family members ([Kusain and McAlpine, 2017](#)).

This policy brief unpacks the current literature on preventing and mitigating GBV, IPV, and VAC during and immediately after conflicts, to identify key lessons for policymakers and practitioners, and highlight important questions that remain unanswered. Given the limits of existing research in this context, the brief also integrates the broader literature on individual-level violence reduction in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), drawing relevant insights into conflict settings.

Although limited evidence exists on the effectiveness of protection programs in humanitarian contexts, we identified six impact evaluations and one pilot impact evaluation assessing interventions aimed at reducing violence against women, adolescents, and children in conflict-affected settings. All of the evaluated programs were implemented by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and included discussion groups, teacher training, life skills training, parenting programs, and safe spaces. While there is limited evidence of violence reduction across these studies, most report positive outcomes like decreased support for wife-beating, strengthened social networks, and improved family interactions. All seven studies provide important insights into dynamics that contribute to and reduce individual-level violence in crisis-affected settings.



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Key Lessons

1. **Combining interventions that target household gender norms with those that target resource strain may be effective in reducing IPV in conflict-affected settings.** While resource strain may be an important driver of IPV in crisis settings, addressing household gender inequities is needed to reduce and prevent IPV.
2. **Reducing violence requires targeting across generations and genders.** Witnessing violence in childhood increases the likelihood of perpetration as adults, particularly in intimate relationships. Breaking cycles of trauma requires targeting interventions across generations and genders.
3. **Building community and networks is important to reducing violence against women and girls.** Community-level approaches, including education programs and life skills sessions, can effectively shift social norms and support networks to reduce violence against women and girls.
4. **Measuring our impact is essential.** This can effectively inform policy and practice aimed at preventing individual-level violence in all its forms.

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This policy brief unpacks the current literature on preventing and mitigating gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, and violence against children during and immediately after conflicts, to identify key lessons for policymakers and practitioners, and highlight important questions that remain unanswered. Given the limits of existing research in this context, this brief also integrates the broader literature on individual-level violence reduction in low- and middle-income countries, drawing relevant insights into conflict settings.