

Conflict

Basic Understanding of Conflict,
Gender and Health

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Conflict

- Conflict is fuelled when the balance of power between different groups
- Large-scale conflicts include religion, territory, language, natural resources, ethnicity, race, migration and political power. Sometimes there is more than one issue of disagreement.
- ***Ref***

- The definition of conflict can be extended from individuals to groups (such as states or nations), and more than two parties can be involved in the conflict.
- In political terms, "conflict" can refer to wars, revolutions or other struggles, which may involve the use of force as in the term armed conflict/militarisation

- Conflict involving nations, ethnic groups, tribes, religious groups, State, insurgents or religion, local militia threatening lives, adversely affecting physical, emotional and public health, of children, young people women and men of all age groups.

Influences of Conflict

- The most important influence is **power** Others include culture, identity and rights.

POWER

- Power is the ability or capacity to do something or to control and influence what others do.
- It determines who makes decisions and what decisions are made.
- We tend to think of power as belonging to public figures who make decisions, such as politicians, corporate houses, religious leaders etc.
- ***Ref:***

- These people often hold a lot of power compared with the people who work for them and buy their products

But...

There are also differences in power in everyday relationships.

For example, age, gender, education, literacy and location all influence the amount of power we have or the amount of power that other people will recognise.

- There are many sources of power. Power is not just military strength. It can include money, networks, information, authority, knowledge, security and access to resources.
- Conflict is fuelled when the balance of power between different groups changes or is very uneven.
- ***Ref***

- One group abuses their power, wants more power **or** fears losing their power. Perhaps another group wants to challenge those in power in order to improve the balance of power.

- It is important to note that the way in which power is used varies.
- In a conflict situation, power can be used either to fuel conflict

Impact

- Social networks disrupted and destroyed
- Changes in family structures
- Everyday life and work disrupted
- Reduce people's personal security
- Shortages of food, water, fuel and other basic services, reduces access to medicines, shelter, food, sanitation and impacts on education, employment
- Physical violence, casualties of death, psychological violence

- Conflict lead to forced displacement, unmet medical needs and neglect in healthcare for people in conflict affected areas. In situations of violent conflict, healthcare facilities are targeted for bombing as are ambulances carrying the wounded, not to mention the large-scale casualties who die or are inflicted with disabilities in such conflicts – of wounds, injuries blinding people and not receiving proper and timely healthcare.

- One of the gendered manifestations of war and conflict is the use of rape and sexual assault as weapons of conflict. They experience reduced mobility, reproductive and sexual choice, an overall disruption in their socio-economic life primarily through the disruption in livelihood, all of which cumulatively violate their human rights.

- Apart from direct violence through the use of weapons, such situations of violence and conflict inflict indirect violence on people by obstructing access to healthcare facilities.

Risks to Public Health during Conflict

- Conflict will inevitably cause loss of lives, physical injuries, widespread mental distress, a worsening of existent malnutrition (particularly among children) and outbreaks of communicable diseases.
- Common, preventable diseases such as diarrhoea, threaten life. Chronic illnesses that can normally be treated lead to severe suffering. The dangers of pregnancy and childbirth are amplified.

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- The on-going crisis with regard to Syrian refugees' journey to neighbouring countries in the Middle-East and to Europe and North America demonstrated the perilous conditions through which they tried to travel to safety but in most of the destinations were met with hostility and bereft of humane conditions of living including lack of access to healthcare.

- The case of Rohingya Muslims trying to escape ethnic cleaning in Myanmar also showed the dangerous circumstances in which they sought to travel by sea, often to be turned back and not allowed to disembark on foreign shores, also demonstrates the plight of refugees.

- A German newspaper Der Spiegel (Putz 2013) Carried a story about Syrian refugees selling their organs in Lebanon in order to survive. It added that, because of this new supply, the price of organs had dropped significantly. So, to survive, some of the three million Syrian refugees (UNHCR 2014), who now live without any income, depend on humanitarian aid and have no hope of returning to their home country in the near future, have nothing but their organ to sell.
- That gives a idea of the degree of despair in which they find themselves.

- Forced displacement due to conflict either as internally displaced persons (IDPs) or at refugees across borders, compounds people's vulnerabilities and jeopardizes their right to life which includes their right to health and well-being. The camps in which they find shelter often have very unhygienic living conditions along with inadequate supplies of their basic needs.

- These grossly violate humanitarian standards and human rights of people for health and well being. Periods of violent conflict are often followed by famines and epidemics that require greater investment and attention to people's access to food, water, sanitation as well as healthcare.
- Conflict situations also impinge upon people's mental health with their experience of trauma that can lead to various illnesses including but not limited to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and so on.

- The health impact of sexual violence during conflict can be disastrous. Young, single, widowed or disabled women may be at particular risk of sexual violence. Injuries, unwanted pregnancies, sexual dysfunction and HIV/AIDS are among the physical consequences. The psychological effects include anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorders, depression and suicide. Traumatized women may have no practical or emotional support.

- Mental healthcare services in conflict situations are almost non-existent thereby having an adverse impact on people's well-being.
- The vicious circle in a conflict-affected state or region includes greater need for allocation of resources and finances to healthcare but they are channelled instead to defence and military expenditure.
- This in turn fuels further conflict and fails to bridge the gap between healthcare needs and actual availability of resources for the same.

- As Leaning and Guha-Sapir (2013) have argued, ensuring proper healthcare in conflict zones involves proper disease control, reproductive health, maternal care, psychosocial support, emergency medical/surgical interventions, as well as sanitation and nutrition services. Further, it is no easy feat to serve as medical personnel in such high-stress situations, without fear, judgment and bias.

impact on women and girl 's education during conflict include:

When schools are destroyed, and children have to travel long distances, girls are more likely to stay at home, as they may be at increased risk of abduction, sexual violence and exploitation. Furthermore, boys may be more able to go out and engage in income-generating activities to pay their own school fees than girls.

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- Teenage pregnancy rates are often very high in refugee and IDP camps, and girls with their own babies may not be able to attend school because of exclusionary policies, social stigma, no extended family to provide childcare, lack of appropriate facilities, etc. Girls who are disabled, disfigured or severely mentally affected by the crisis are likely to be kept at home, possibly even hidden from outsiders, and very unlikely to be able to go to school.

Responding to Conflict

- Giving in
- Cooperating
- Compromising
- Indifference
- Forcing
- Revolting/protesting
- Finding solutions

- Involving in peace building process, restoration of relationships,
- Resolving issues and build relationships,
- Communicate and discuss hurt
- Reconciliation
- *Ref:*

- It is important to deal with the underlying cause of the problem as well as the symptom along with addressing the immediate and long term impact of conflict.

- The need for the global community to have more humane responses to humanitarian crises induced by conflicts, with particular attention to their health and well-being.

References

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- *More references to be added*