

UN Report - World Population Report "Shelter from the Storm - A Transformative Agenda for Women and Girls in a Crisis Prone World"



Today, more than 100 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance – more than any time in since the Second World War. Among those displaced by conflict or uprooted by disaster are tens of millions of women and adolescent girls. This is the focus of this year's UN Population Fund State of the World Population Report "Shelter from the Storm - A Transformative Agenda for Women and Girls in a Crisis Prone World" available at: <http://www.unfpa.org/swop>. **Dr. Kirsten Johnson**, Assistant Professor at the Department of Family Medicine, is one of the lead authors.

The UNFPA Report focuses on the vulnerabilities and risks faced by women and children in humanitarian settings. The report argues that because women are likely to have less of everything – less income, less access to land and less education, and unequal protection under the law – they are disproportionately

disadvantaged and not well prepared to survive or recover from a crisis. Incidences of gender-based violence soar during and after a crisis, and rape is often used as a weapon of war. Extreme hardship can also push some women into sex work and make them vulnerable to trafficking. Sixty per cent of all preventable maternal deaths are estimated to occur in humanitarian and conflict settings, the UNFPA says, which equates to nearly 500 deaths each day. "In the tumultuous early phase of a crisis, food, shelter and care for acute physical trauma often seem the most compelling needs, with gender or any other kind of discrimination something that can be put off for a safer day. Thinking this way, however, can make a response blind to realities," says the report. It adds that protecting the health and rights of women and young people is not only critical to weathering the chaos of wars and natural disasters but can also accelerate recovery.

The findings in this Report are relevant as Canada brings in refugees – the majority of who are women and children affected by conflict in Syria and elsewhere. It brings to light the context they may have come from, issues around health and reproductive health and factors that contribute to resilience and recovery.

Dr. Johnson is a practicing Emergency Physician and a clinician-scientist at the Department of Family Medicine. Her research has focused on child combatants, women in war and sexual gender-based violence and conflict-related mental health and psychosocial support. She is involved in humanitarian professionalization, working on the development of competencies for training, education and certification of humanitarian responders globally. For more information about Dr. Johnson's programs please go to: www.humanitarianu.com or <https://www.mcgill.ca/familymed/global-health/courses/hsir>