



THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON LIBYAN WOMEN



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

Intro

Since 2011, Libya has descended into war, causing untold human suffering, political instability and the collapse of the economy. As conflict has forced many women to rely on themselves for survival, gender-based violence and insecurity have taken a terrible toll on their wellbeing and limited their economic, political and social opportunities, with severe consequences for Libya's future.

Based on quantitative and qualitative research in eight locations across Libya, including a random survey of 699 women and 287 men, The research commissioned by UN [The Economic and Social Impact of Conflict on Libyan Women](#) sheds light on the consequences of the crisis for women and girls and their prospects for employment, economic recovery, political participation and empowerment and identifies opportunities for developing a gender-responsive recovery framework that creates the basis for an inclusive society.

Key Findings

LIBYAN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC STATUS AND ROLE IN THE LABOUR MARKET

- 40 percent of the women surveyed in the study served as their head of household, an extraordinarily high number not only for the region but globally;
- The majority of Libyan women are unemployed ([61 percent of the women surveyed](#)). The study revealed that women are less likely to be employed than men, with 90 percent of men and [35 percent](#) of women were employed. Of the unemployed women, [41 percent](#) were actively seeking employment and [23 percent](#) were no longer seeking employment;
- Women are significantly less likely to work in the private sector than men. Of the [35 percent](#) of women who were employed, [only four percent](#) were either self-employed or employers. Employed women were [15 percent](#) less likely than men to hold managerial-level jobs.
- Libyan women mostly rely on family networks to find employment, while men have greater access to social capital and networks beyond the family. Moreover, women surveyed earned nearly [three times less](#) than men and are predominant in the public sector, mostly in education and health. Their disproportionate representation in these sector conforms to social stereotypes of women as caregivers and limit their employability in the private sector.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT, SOCIAL NORMS AND GENDER STEREOTYPES

- The study found that women's freedom of movement is significantly lower than men's and that negative gender stereotypes continue to curtail women's equality. Women in the survey were [four times](#) more likely than men to have never left their homes alone, approximately [four times](#) more likely to have never travelled between cities or neighbourhoods alone, and approximately [three times](#) more likely to have never travelled outside of Libya alone.
- Perceptions of women's civic engagement continue to be shaped by social norms and negative gender stereotypes. Women were [25 percent](#) more likely to never have engaged with a security provider, [18 percent](#) more likely not to have attended civil society meetings, [15 percent](#) less likely to

have contributed to community decisions, and [20 percent](#) less likely to have attended community meetings.

- While the study found that women and men perceive women as participating more frequently in family decision-making now than before the revolution, this increase in women's agency within the home did not extend to decisions related to family finances. [46 percent](#) of men stated that they decide financial matters alone, compared to [27 percent of women](#) (who correlate with female heads of households).

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

- Generally, between [53 percent and 61 percent](#) of women surveyed did not feel represented by local and national institutions.
- Between [57 percent and 73 percent](#) of female respondents reported that they had never attended community meetings, with the majority also reporting never having participated in a community meeting either before or after July 2014.

LEGAL REFORM AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE:

- The Libyan legal system does not adequately protect women against domestic violence, honour crimes or rape. Women are twice as likely to rely on their family and family networks to resolve violent crimes. This suggests that the current legal system does not allow women to pursue formal avenues of justice and forces victims of gender-based violence to resort to informal means of dispute resolution.

Recommendations:

- Ensure that gender-sensitive economic recovery is prioritized in all peacebuilding activities and engage women at the local and national levels in future political dialogues and peace negotiations as well as in the early stages of planning for the country's recovery;
- Develop programmes that focus on supporting women's self-employment and business start-up while combating stereotypes about women's roles to promote women's engagement in the private sector and "non-traditional" fields;
- Libya should dismiss its reservations to CEDAW and bring its penal code in line with international instruments barring gender discrimination and implement international resolutions on eliminating gender-based violence, particularly sexual violence and other violations of women's human rights in conflict-related settings. Otherwise, many gender-based crimes in transitional justice and/or conflict settings will not be adequately documented or addressed, and survivors will not be compensated.
- Ensure that future projects, operations and initiatives to stabilise Libya mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment through shedding light on gender stereotypes and restrictions that prevent women from reaching their potential in contributing to peace and security in Libya.
- Promote women's meaningful participation in national institutions through recommended quota levels of 30%, and promote women's meaningful participation in all peace processes, and gender responsive budgeting.