



**Now is the Time:  
Research on Gender Justice,  
Conflict and Fragility in the  
Middle East and North Africa**

Executive Summary



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
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international  
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## Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil society organisation
EFM	Early and forced marriage
FCO	Foreign Commonwealth Office
FGD	Focus group discussion
FGM	Female genital mutilation
GBV	Gender-based violence
GONGO	Government-organised non-governmental organisation
GPC	General People's Congress
IDP	Internally displaced person
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
KII	Key informant interview
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MP	Member of parliament
NAP	National Action Plan
NCW	National Council for Women
NDC	National Dialogue Conference
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSVAW	National Strategy for Combating Violence Against Women
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
PA	Palestinian Authority
PIE	Person-in-environment
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WPS	Women, peace and security
WRO	Women's rights organisation

Credit: Oxfam. Persons photographed in this document were not interviewed for the purpose of this research.



**“No matter where you are everyone says that now is not the time to talk about these issues. There is no such thing as women’s rights. We are in a war now, there is a massive humanitarian crisis. They say now is not the time”<sup>1</sup>**

**Now is the Time.**

<sup>1</sup> Female research respondent, Yemen

In January 2017, Oxfam Great Britain commissioned International Alert to undertake a study that examines the impact of fragility and conflict on gender justice and women’s rights in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The research was part of a larger Oxfam project entitled ‘Promoting the Needs of Women in Conflict in the Middle East and North Africa’, funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In collaboration with the Oxfam technical committee, Alert designed and implemented a research methodology aimed at understanding how conflict and fragility in four different contexts – Egypt, Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) and Yemen – has affected the path towards the realisation of gender equality and gender justice in the past several years of political and social change – for better or for worse.

The objectives of this study are to:

- Inform and influence discourse and programmes on gender justice in fragile and conflict-affected settings, considering the United Nations (UN) women, peace and security (WPS) agenda;
- Inform policy recommendations to national governments and regional bodies in relation to the implementation of commitments on gender equality and WPS in conflict-affected states; and
- Provide policy and programmatic recommendations to international development actors on mitigating the negative effects of conflict and advancing gender justice in fragile and conflict-affected settings in the MENA region.

## The research explores the following questions:

1. Who is filling the gaps left by the state in the four project countries? What positions, discourses and actions do these actors and the state adopt towards gender justice and women's rights? How have these positions changed over time?
2. What are the consequences of the above on the ability of civil society organisations (CSOs) and women's rights organisations (WROs) to drive a gender justice agenda?
3. What are the strategies developed by national and regional WROs and CSOs to counter this reduction in space and push the women's rights agenda forward?
4. What role do international development actors (donors, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs)) have to play in countering the negative effects of conflict and fragility on the realisation of women and girls' rights?

While women and girls form a specific focus of this project, we acknowledge that gender issues are not limited to women and girls. Dominant gender attitudes held by men and women alike can be obstacles to gender equality. Indeed, we urge for an approach to understanding gender in a holistic, 'broader and deeper', manner, taking into account women, girls, men and boys as well as other gender identities, and being alert to how these identities interact with other societal markers such as age, urban/rural location, ethnicity, religion and disability. These factors play a key role in defining individual needs and vulnerabilities as well as the degree of agency of individuals in

contexts of social and economic transformation, including violent conflict. However, they are also both shaped by development and conflict dynamics and in turn themselves shape these processes.

## Key findings

The following key findings were elucidated from the research:

- \* **1. The wider political and human rights environment is having a significant impact on gender equality and justice.**  
Failure to deal with the broader contextual drivers of exclusion and oppression will undermine the effectiveness of and ability to deliver gender-specific programmes. It may also unfairly raise expectations among WROs about the scope for real change.
- \* **2. Ending armed conflicts through diplomatic means that are shaped by women's leadership and meaningful participation will be critical to ensuring success in the achievement of gender justice and combatting violence against women.**  
The participants of this research consider that the international community must exercise its influence on parties to end conflicts by using its position of relative strength compared to WROs that do not possess the political protection to make forceful criticisms of incumbent governments.
- \* **3. Across the board, gender equality ranks low on the agenda of local and state governance actors, especially in comparison to issues such as maintaining or increasing political power and control of resources.** This serves to keep gender justice on the back-burner and limits progress. In contexts where state actors appear to be progressing the gender



justice agenda, many respondents cynically perceive this to be a gesture designed to win favour and legitimacy in the eyes of the international community.

- \* **4. Despite some variation in structure, behaviour and resources between contexts, state systems lack the political will and legitimacy to progress gender equality; in some cases they are even tarnishing the cause of gender equality.**
- \* **5. Both state and non-state actors have an interest in obstructing gender equality and justice, as maintaining inequalities anchors models of oppression and control.** Civil society and WROs have attempted to provide services for women and girls, and lobby for improved representation when institutions cannot meet these citizens' needs. Yet, they are increasingly constrained by surrounding conflict, donor priorities and, in some cases, their own social environment.
- \* **6. There is an ongoing constriction of civil society space in all contexts studied, which serves to undermine any progress that WROs and others working on the gender justice agenda have made in the last few years.**
- \* **7. There is a gap between the rhetoric and action of the international community concerning government violations of human rights and justice in the MENA.** International actors are failing to address or have significant impact on the structural issues that keep progress towards gender justice at bay. High-level pressure and diplomacy efforts that include the leadership and meaningful participation of women to end conflict and stop blatant

human rights violations are just as needed as additional funds for humanitarian or development work.

- \* **8. Donors and INGOs<sup>2</sup> are inadvertently hindering the gender justice agenda by exerting a disproportionate influence on the priorities, type of work and opportunities of WROs in the four contexts.** Most WROs that were interviewed find it difficult to pursue their own agendas and strategies if these do not line up with donor priorities.
- \* **9. The recent intensification of violence in Iraq, the Gaza Strip and Yemen have led donor priorities to overwhelmingly shift towards providing funds for humanitarian aid.** While this is justified, it also overtakes or completely obscures the longer-term gender development agenda. As a result, many WROs in Iraq, Yemen and the OPT have transitioned to humanitarian programming, putting their strategic gender justice work on pause. The unintended consequence is the near disappearance of the gender justice agenda.
- \* **10. There is a lack of recognition of the linkages between women's meaningful participation in humanitarian response and improved outcomes for delivering relief and conflict resolution.** There is also a lack of recognition of the interaction between humanitarian efforts and the wider social and political context in which it is delivered, underlining the importance of gender and conflict-sensitive approaches to humanitarian aid, which are based on and respond to a strong gender and context analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Donors and INGOs were at times conflated in interviews with WROs: this is likely due to the fact that INGOs often play a donor role (rather than a partnership role) in their dealings with local WROs and CSOs.

- ✱ **11. In all four contexts, women and girls are highly concerned with the decline in economic opportunities and the rise in the cost of living – a cross-cutting concern that impacts women and men and rural and urban residents, albeit in different ways.**
- ✱ **12. Religious leaders and discourses are influential in people's lives and ideas about gender roles and rights, but there are mixed opinions among women's rights activists on the utility of working with religious leaders.**

## Background on gender equality and justice in Egypt, Iraq, OPT and Yemen

Many countries in the MENA are fragile contexts characterised by unresponsive and weak institutions, low political will and stark gender inequality. Countries in the MENA region have historically performed poorly on gender equality indicators,<sup>3</sup> which has been linked to the region's high levels of authoritarianism, low levels of democracy and poor governance.<sup>4</sup>

Women's groups have often championed global movements for democracy, which indicates that women's participation and positive democratic outcomes go hand in hand.<sup>5</sup> Arab countries that have made

<sup>3</sup> For example, Yemen was ranked last out of 142 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index prior to the breakout of the armed conflict in 2015. See: World Economic Forum, The global gender gap report 2014, Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2014, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/>

<sup>4</sup> R. Inglehart and P. Norris, *Rising tide: Gender equality and cultural change around the world*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003; L.J. Benstead, *Barrier or opportunity: Political Islam and support for women's political participation in Morocco*, *Al-Raida*, Issue 135–136, 2011–2012, p.20

<sup>5</sup> V. Moghadam, *Modernising women and democratisation after the Arab Spring*, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 19(2), 2014, p.139

advances in women's participation and rights (such as Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco) seemed more likely to achieve successful democratic transitions following the Arab uprisings that begun in 2010. However, the Arab uprisings ushered in a period of change and uncertainty, which led to significant obstacles in the realisation of peaceful and democratic societies – and gender justice – in Egypt, Iraq, OPT and Yemen.

In **Egypt**, the January 25 revolution of 2011 was characterised by the robust participation of women and men, yet this positive development was marred by highly publicised attacks, especially on female protesters, and the deliberate sidelining of women from engaging in the political process.<sup>6</sup> Egypt has continued to slip into deeper authoritarianism and fragility amidst an economic crisis, with the state severely cracking down on civil society.

In **Iraq**, WROs have played a prominent role in the country's history, although their influence has at times been affected by various conflicts. The 2003 Iraq War and subsequent civil war had a devastating impact on women including an increase in human trafficking and forced prostitution, assassination of female activists, domestic violence, family violence and honour killings, discriminatory legislation and higher poverty rates. The predominant conflict in Iraq is between the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) armed group and a coalition of the Iraqi military, Kurdish Peshmerga forces and Shia Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). In 2013–2014, ISIS captured large parts of western and northern Iraq, and there has been constant conflict ever since. This conflict has had a destructive impact on women and contributed to the internal displacement of around three million Iraqis to other parts of the country, including the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

<sup>6</sup> S. Hafez, *The revolution will not pass through women's bodies: Egypt, uprising and gender politics*, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 19(2), 2014, p.173

There has been a strong tradition of women's self-organisation in the **OPT** dating back to the time of the British mandate (1920–1948). Women's groups – such as the Arab Women Society in Nablus, Arab Women's Union in Jerusalem and Arab Women's Association of Palestine – first formed across the Palestinian territory in the 1920s. These groups had divergent objectives and participated in a wide range of activities including charitable giving, educational work, and both violent and non-violent direct political action against the British mandate.<sup>7</sup> Some contemporary WROs have their origins in these groups, while others were formed in response to the negative gendered impacts of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Despite the long history of women's self-organisation, Palestinian society still remains deeply patriarchal and is strongly marked by traditional gender roles. In times of conflict, however, these gender roles have been forced to be more flexible, driving Palestinian women to take on the tasks that were the traditional preserve of men.

**Yemeni** women have seen dramatic highs and lows in the past six years: women effectively led the 2011 revolution but now bear the weight of a brutal armed conflict. This mirrors the duality of the two predominant depictions of women in Yemen society. On the one hand, they are seen as emotionally weak and in need of protection, while on the other, the “egalitarian ethic” affords women roles in the economy and informal decision-making. Yet Yemeni women have been and continue to act as first responders and informal peacemakers at the community level, providing representation to women in front of community leaders and solving everyday problems.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> E. Fleischmann, *The nation and 'its' new women: The Palestinian women's movement, 1920–1948*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003<sup>7</sup>

<sup>8</sup> M-C. Heinze, *Women's role in peace and security in Yemen: Literature review*, London: Saferworld/Center for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient, 2016 citing N. Adra, *Tribal mediation and empowered women: Potential contributions of heritage to national development in Yemen*, *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 5(2), 2016, pp.301–337

The advent of women's movements in the Arab world was intertwined with Arab struggles for independence from colonial governments in the 19th and 20th centuries.<sup>9</sup> It is then only logical that the push for good governance, democratisation and development in the MENA region has been inseparable from women's rights and gender justice. These linkages between governance and women's rights and gender equality were a recurring theme of consultations with WROs and local women and girls conducted in the scope of this research.

## Research approach and methodology

Alert implemented a multi-pronged qualitative approach to seek out multiple perspectives and sources of information. The approach accounted for some of the gaps in access to respondents and to information, as well as the potential partiality of respondents. The researchers conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with four categories of respondents:

- \* national WROs and CSOs carrying out gender programming;
- \* key informants and activists;
- \* academics and researchers specialised in gender issues; and
- \* individuals from INGOs and UN bodies involved in gender programming.

Local researchers also conducted focus group discussions (FGD) in each of the localities. A total of 58 key informant interviews (KIIs) and 13 FGDs were conducted across the four contexts. A literature review preceded the field research and desk research was also employed throughout the period of the study to supplement the findings from the field research.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS), *The Arab women's movement: Struggles and experiences*, in UNDP RBAS, *Arab human development report 2005: Towards the rise of women in the Arab world*, New York: UNDP, 2006, pp.123–140, [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/rbas\\_ahdr2005\\_en.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/rbas_ahdr2005_en.pdf)

Challenges included the short duration of the study that limited the number of respondents, and security constraints that hindered access to prospective respondents. In addition to this report, four country case studies have been produced. These provide a snapshot of the key conflict issues in each country and summarise key research findings according to each specific location.

## Recommendations

Some of the following recommendations are reinforced by previous research in the region, underlining their continued importance. With previous research indicating that times of conflict sometimes represent opportunities to break away from the status quo and redefine gender norms, this research underscores the immense challenges brought about by conflict and fragility and therefore lend more urgency to these recommended actions. The opportunities that can manifest during conflict in the form of shifts in gender roles and norms in response to changed social and economic conditions reinforce the need for action now, rather than later. The changes that must take place for the realization of gender equality will not happen in a short period of time, and long-term, strategic engagement is necessary to realize this objective. Now is the time to step up our commitments to gender equality and gender justice in MENA.

The recommendations are converged to cover all four contexts with country or context specific recommendations being given where appropriate.

**1. Donor support to states in conflict and recovery stages should ensure that gender machineries have the resources and technical capacity to deliver their mandate,** and should establish

clear and transparent monitoring frameworks to ensure progress and transparency.

- a. In **Egypt**, donors should provide funding to the relevant ministries to implement the National Strategy for Combating Violence Against Women (NSVAW). Funding should be given in tranches, with a clear monitoring framework that attaches concrete benchmarks that must be met before new tranches of funding are disbursed.
- b. In **Iraq**, donors, UN agencies and INGOs should urge the government to allocate funding for the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) 1325 Initiative. They should compel or require the government to work with a wider range of CSOs. All funding provided to the Iraqi government should be accompanied by transparent monitoring frameworks.
- c. In the **OPT**, donors should hold the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) accountable to implement their obligations around UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1325.

**2. Donors and INGOs should revive and increase funding for long-term strategic work in gender equality and justice** – including programmes centred on women's political participation and economic empowerment – alongside humanitarian response.

- a. In **Iraq**, programmes on topics such as legal awareness training and SGBV advocacy programmes have been defunded in favour of trauma and psycho-social programming. Donors and INGOs should revive funding for these topics in parallel with funding for



the much-needed emergency psycho-social support and trauma care.

- b. In **Yemen**, continue to support partner WROs that are already carrying out small-scale projects in women's economic empowerment and political participation. Advocate with donors to widen these projects to include more geographical locations and a larger number of beneficiaries. At the same time, continue to fund gender-responsive humanitarian programmes and ensure that there are resources available for sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention and mitigation, as well as women's access to justice and economic empowerment.

**3.** Principles of conflict-sensitivity and early recovery need to be more fully integrated within the humanitarian response.

**4. International actors (including governments, the European Union, UN actors and INGOs) should aim to be more assertive in applying the principles of the UNSC resolution 1325 on all parties at Track I and Track II peace negotiations, and/or communicate where they have done this and to what effect.**

Ensuring women's leadership and meaningful participation in peace talks and negotiations demands a significant amount of pressure from UN bodies, donors, INGOs and local CSOs. All parties should follow the recommendations laid out in UN Women's 2015 global study on UNSC resolution 1325.<sup>10</sup> This also means not backing down when parties refuse to accept women in the process. International actors should also make efforts to bring Track III work closer to Tracks I and II so that local efforts are closer to high-level efforts.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Coomaraswamy, Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing the peace: A global study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, UN Women, 2015, pp.394–396, [http://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/en/GlobalStudy\\_EN\\_Web.pdf](http://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/en/GlobalStudy_EN_Web.pdf)

- a. In **Yemen**, the UN should ensure that at least 30% of participants in peace talks are women, including women members of conflict parties, and WROs and CSOs.

**5. It is essential for international actors to undertake more assertive advocacy and follow-through on gender justice and equality with states characterised by non-democratic and poor human rights practices, and/or communicate where they have done this and to what effect.**

The broader political and human rights environment has a significant impact on progress towards gender justice and the operational space for WROs. Failure to address the political drivers of exclusion and oppression will undermine the effectiveness of efforts to strengthen gender justice and equality. International actors can build a 'critical mass' of advocates through regional and global partnerships that can apply concerted pressure on states as well as have unified messaging and monitoring. This will help ensure the survival of WROs in the region amidst growing threats to space for civil society.

- a. In **Egypt**, INGOs, donor governments and UN agencies should jointly pressure the state to immediately cease its crackdown on civil society using all means of leverage available. Any funding provided to the state in support of women's rights should: be given in periodic tranches, be attached to conditions that require cooperation with civil society and contain clear monitoring frameworks and benchmarks that must be met to receive future funding.

<sup>11</sup> Track I diplomacy refers to official governmental diplomacy, while Track II diplomacy refers to non-governmental, informal and unofficial contacts and activities between private citizens or groups of individuals sometimes called 'non-state actors'. D. Snodderly, Peace terms: Glossary of terms for conflict management and peacebuilding, Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2011, pp.50–51, <http://www.usip.org/publications/usip-peace-terms-glossary/>

- b. In **federal Iraq**, donor governments, INGOs and UN agencies should apply any influence that they have on the government in Baghdad to be more cooperative with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and WROs, including easing bureaucratic requirements for registration and permits to work. In the KRI, donors, INGOs and UN agencies should pressure the government to work with CSOs that are not affiliated with political parties.
- c. In the **OPT**, donors, governments, UN agencies and INGOs should not ignore the pivotal role that the occupation and blockade has played in repressing the rights of women and girls. Support to WROs should include long-term funding and capacity-building for advocacy, with support for risk analysis and mitigation.
- d. In **Yemen**, State and non-State actors and the UN should expend all possible efforts to find a political solution to the conflict, continuing to push for the inclusion of women at all levels.

**6. International actors should improve practices around transparency and measuring outcomes and progress of funds provided to states, government bodies and semi-state institutions to improve women’s rights. Funding to states and government-organised non-governmental organisations (GONGOs)<sup>12</sup> should always necessitate clear benchmarks for progress** that are regularly communicated with the public in the local language, in order for citizens to understand how and for what purpose their governments are using the money. When possible, WROs should be engaged in supporting the state and monitoring the progress.

- a. In **Egypt**, advocate for a clear monitoring framework that

<sup>12</sup>A GONGO is an organization that is set up to mimic a civic organizations but is sponsored by a government to support its political interests

ensures that the steps outlined in the NSVAW are carried out as stipulated. Urge the National Council for Women (NCW) and the other involved ministries to publicise the content and objectives of the strategy in Egyptian media and online.

- b. In the **OPT**, impel the PA and the MoWA to fully implement the action plans, and provide funding and technical support for them to do this.

**7. UN bodies, INGOs and other international actors tend to repeatedly engage with the same pool of organisations and activists. They should aim to reach further afield in their relationships and partnerships**, diversifying along geographic, socio-economic and generational lines. This should be done by developing and expanding partnerships with organisations outside of central urban centres, and by identifying, developing and supporting young activists to promote the gender justice agenda. This should be done in tandem with actions outlined in recommendations 5 and 8, which relate to protecting and expanding the operating space for CSOs.

- a. In **Yemen**, continue programmes that reach beyond the immediate pool of activists; ensure that there is equal geographic coverage and representation of activists and organisations in the south and in the north.

**8. Increase donors and INGOs’ appetite for financial and, when appropriate, security risks.** When possible, INGOs and donors should simplify/streamline complex funding and reporting requirements to enable a wider diversity of organisations to access funds, and should allow for a greater margin of risk in their own programming and advocacy. INGOs and donors have been accused

of being risk-averse in their programmes, which prevents them from trying novel approaches, engaging with new partners or entering into new locations. One way to address this could be to make more explicit the link between appetite for risk and progress on gender justice objectives, the latter being difficult to achieve without the former.

- a. In **Egypt**, encourage national partners to expand their networks of women's organisations throughout the country, and to report areas where the NCW is not cooperating with national and local NGOs.
- b. In **Iraq**, donors should make efforts to fund more national NGOs instead of INGOs, including those in remote areas that do not currently receive international funding and those that are not affiliated with political parties.
- c. In the **OPT**, donors and INGOs should fund projects in the neglected East Jerusalem area, where there is a significant need for programmes in SGBV response.
- d. In **Yemen**, make an effort to reach out to prospective partners that are based outside the capital, Sana'a, and when possible work with partners in low security areas that have low donor coverage.

**9.** Donors and INGOs are inadvertently creating competition among local organisations that depend on international funding. Donors should improve their mutual coordination to ensure a fair distribution of funds across partners and geographical areas.

- a. In **Iraq**, national and local organisations have experienced a brain drain as their staff members – often attracted by the higher salaries on offer – have moved onto INGOs, and also find

themselves competing with INGOs for funding. Direct and earmarked funding should be provided to national NGOs working on women's rights as a priority. Donors should prioritise national NGOs over INGOs when allocating funding, and both INGOs and donors should strengthen the capacity of national and local organisations to implement projects to ensure long-term sustainability.

**10.** Donor governments and INGOs should **urge (and when possible require) state actors to allocate and disburse funding to WROs** through mechanisms with transparent application and selection criteria, in order to expand the cooperation between the state and wider pools of WROs and to decrease WRO dependency on international donors.

- a. In **Egypt**, donors, UN bodies and INGOs that work with the NCW and other ministries involved in the NSVAW should urge, and when possible require, these actors to involve WROs fully in the implementation and monitoring of the NSVAW.

**11.** WROs struggle to accomplish their work with funding paradigms based on short-term projects. Provide multi-year core funding to WROs so that they can implement long-term initiatives in support of gender equality and gender justice. **Grant-making mechanisms and reporting requirements should likewise be more user-friendly and simple** to avoid administrative burden of WROs and those with limited English abilities.

**12.** Economic struggles are an overarching concern of men and women across all four contexts. Support for economic empowerment programmes is desperately needed, particularly for women in conflict

zones who are most adversely impacted. **Economic empowerment work should be tailored to the contexts and the different possibilities of men and women, and expand beyond the current models that tend to be small-scale and short-term,** to make way for long-term recovery and improved stability.

**13. Humanitarian responses should embed the WPS** agenda, as foreseen by the relief and recovery pillar of resolution 1325,<sup>13</sup> **at the core of the humanitarian response. Humanitarian actors should substantively engage women and meet their needs at all stages of programmes and at all levels.** Women from affected communities should co-lead the design, implementation and monitoring of humanitarian programming, in addition to being meaningfully consulted, to ensure better representation of the needs of all segments of society. Donors, UN agencies and INGOs should enact and implement a quota of 40% women in leadership and staff positions in national and international humanitarian organisations. Donors should also ensure that there is adequate funding for purposeful gender mainstreaming and SGBV response and coordination mechanisms.

- a. In **Yemen**, current INGO- and UN-led efforts to build the capacity of Yemeni NGO staff and local authorities in gender and in SGBV risk mitigation and response should receive continued funding, and should be expanded to improve the gender responsiveness of the humanitarian response. They should also give more planning responsibilities to WROs and activate Arabic as an official language of humanitarian coordination systems and responses.

**14.** In contexts that have seen positive developments at the level of policy and legislation, **more resources are needed to support national partners with raising awareness among women and men, and dealing with informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices.**

- a. In **Egypt**, donors and INGOs should continue to (or increase) support to local partners to carry out programmes intended to raise consciousness with the aim of changing men's behaviour towards women's rights; this includes building on the work done in sexual harassment and capitalising on greater awareness of this issue by positively influencing attitudes that will change behaviour. Programmes should also seek to positively change consciousness around other forms of SGBV such as domestic violence, and should raise awareness on the benefits of women's economic and political participation.

**15.** Recognising that gender justice and equality cannot be divorced from broader governance issues, **national and international actors must shape existing and future governance programmes with a gender lens.** Such programmes should seek to strengthen the involvement of women from diverse backgrounds in advocating for, delivering and monitoring improved governance, and seek to understand and address incentives related to power and resources that stand in the way of progress on gender equality and justice.

<sup>13</sup> What is U.N. Security Council resolution 1325 and why is it so critical today?, United States Institute of Peace, [https://www.usip.org/gender\\_peacebuilding/about\\_UNSCR\\_1325](https://www.usip.org/gender_peacebuilding/about_UNSCR_1325), accessed April 2017



Two young Yemeni girls who left their home looking for safety – Credit: Hind Al-Eryani | Oxfam  
Persons photographed in this document were not interviewed for the purpose of this research.



Cover Image: A Iraqi woman looks out of her damaged house – Credit: Tommy Trenchard | Oxfam  
Persons photographed in this document were not interviewed for the purpose of this research.

