

## Gender-Based Violence Among IDP Children in Kabul: Measures to Take

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The Global Report on Internal Displacement presented that approximately 30.6 million new internal displacements were associated with conflict and disaster which were recorded in 2017 as to 143 countries and territories. On the same year, 39 percent of all new displacement was due to conflict and violence, and 61 percent by disasters. Furthermore, the number of recent displacements linked to conflict and violence reached 11.8 million in 2017 which almost doubled in number compared to 6.9 million in 2016. Afghanistan ranked 8 out of 10 of those who are most affected by conflict. Moreover, in South Asia, displacement is triggered by disasters with Afghanistan as an exception where approximately 474,000 were displaced where the country ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in this region.<sup>1</sup>

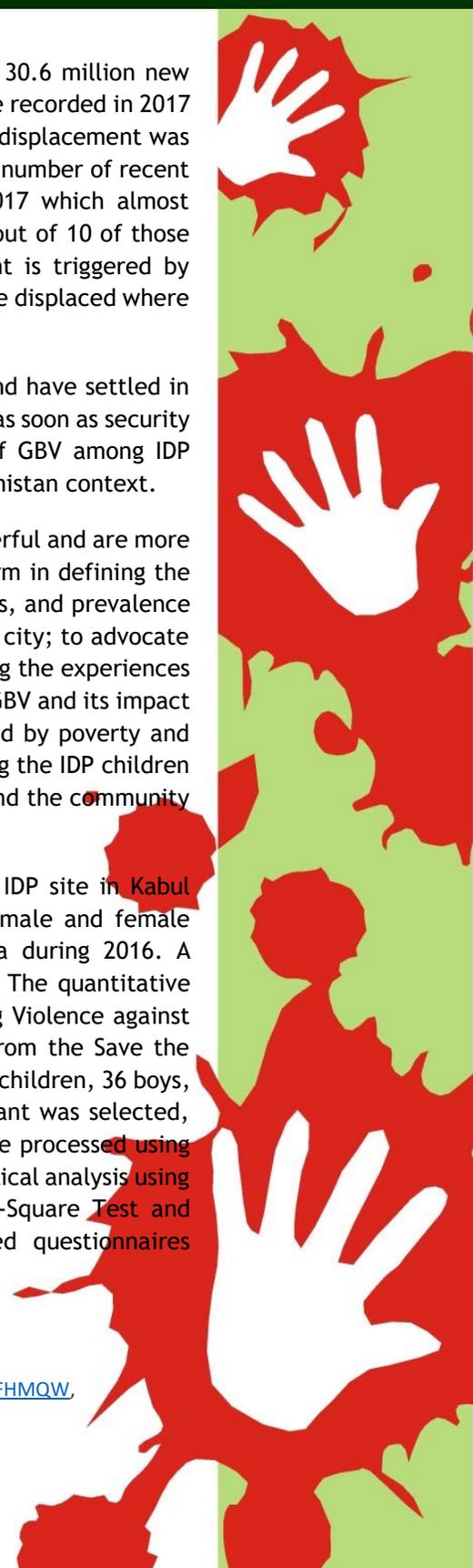
IDPs in this study are those people who are displaced because of conflict and have settled in Kabul for less than a year. They are willing to go back to their place of origin as soon as security allows. The overall purpose of the research is to study the prevalence of GBV among IDP children in Kabul City and endeavours to understand better GBV in an Afghanistan context.

Apart from women, children were among those who are considered less powerful and are more vulnerable to experience GBV which were emphasised in the Beijing Platform in defining the various types of violence. The study intends to understand the nature, forms, and prevalence of Gender-Based Violence among both boys and girls in IDP settings in Kabul city; to advocate for legislation and policies addressing Gender-Based Violence by documenting the experiences of boys and girls in IDP settings, and to encourage a culture of awareness of GBV and its impact on an extremely vulnerable group of conflict-affected children marginalised by poverty and social exclusion. The study provides a clear picture of what is going on among the IDP children in the perspectives of the IDP children themselves, their parents or adults and the community members of the IDP site in Kabul Afghanistan.

This policy note is based on a mapping study that was conducted on the IDP site in Kabul identifying eligible households that were included in the study who had male and female children within the age bracket 9-17, and 45 households fit the criteria during 2016. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is used in this study. The quantitative part comprised a survey questionnaire utilising the framework of Measuring Violence against Children in Humanitarian Settings: A Compendium of Methods and Tools from the Save the Children study male and female children within the age range of 9-17 and 75 children, 36 boys, and 39 girls. For every household included in the study, one adult participant was selected, hence, a total of 45 adult respondents, 21 male, and 24 females. Data were processed using frequencies, percentages, weighted mean, rank, composite mean, and statistical analysis using t-test for uncorrelated means, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, Chi-Square Test and Analysis of Variance. The qualitative part made use of semi-structured questionnaires

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<sup>1</sup>"Grid 2018: Global Report on Internal Displacement." 2018. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/DFHMQW>, (accessed last 13 August 2018).



conducted among boys, girls, adults (significant others of the IDP children). A total of four FGDs were conducted for male and female that represent 9-13 and 14-17 age categories.

Findings reveal that the majority of the participants shared the same views that children cannot take on responsibilities, cannot distinguish right and wrong, and are below 15. While boys and girls share physical characteristics, except for their genitals, their differences are perceived about gender roles, social mobility, sexual characteristics, physical appearance, responsibility levels, and the games they play. Being a boy is better than being a girl because of the physical mobility and opportunities to earn income for the family is afforded to them, while girls are considered properties at any point in their life.

The study participants shared that the majority of boys while in their place of origin attended the Madrasa and school, a few helped the elders in agricultural activities, and still others grazed livestock. In contrast, in the current place, the majority of them are earning to add their insufficient family income. Girls are engaged in household chores in the IDP site, while they were into embroidery, tailoring and collecting cotton seeds and household chores in their place of origin. Even female participants claimed that boys receive more respect and preferential treatments in their homes than they do. However, the majority of the child respondents and participants in both quantitative and qualitative results claimed that being boys in the family increased the likelihood of being slapped, punched, or beaten. The percentage of boys who experienced all three forms of physical assault from their family on account of their sex is three times that of their girl counterparts. Female adult respondents, compared to their male counterparts, are more inclined to slap, punch or beat their male and female children. These findings are in line with the claims of the children respondents. These results also surfaced among the adult respondents and interviews. Since boys are going out of their house to earn their living to contribute to the family income, boys are significantly more likely to experience physical assault from the community members than their girl counterparts.

Boys also experienced more frequent episodes of emotional and psychological abuse from their parents and strangers in the community than their female counterparts, and the mother being identified by the majority as the perpetrators of cursing words. Such findings run parallel with the adult respondents. It surfaced in the qualitative results that mothers cursed their daughters than sons, and fathers cursed sons more than daughters. Female child respondents experienced such with parents and family members because they only stay in their homes.

Both male and female respondents in the two age categories reported that the top three harmful marriage practices in their families and communities are paying *walwar*—bride price, betrothal, *badal* and *baad*.

The majority of male FGD participants (both age groups) highlighted that in their community of origin boys are getting married between ages 15-20 years old. However, boys are getting married at an older age in the IDP sites.

Just like the other forms of sexual assault by other family members, cases of *bachaBazi* are very rare in the respondents' community. Almost all male and female IDI informants from all categories asserted that they are aware of many girls' sexual harassment cases both in Kabul and Kunduz.

The male IDP informants stated that they are not aware of any boy's sexual harassment (*bachaBazi*) cases in Kabul. However, only one reported cases of *bachaBazi* in Kunduz. None of the young female respondents were engaged in child labour, whereas, almost all male respondents reported working for pay at least a day in a week by scavenging and collecting garbage and waste materials from the streets, and as cleaners or washers a month before being interviewed. All the male adult respondents reported scavenging work and recovery of waste



materials from garbage bins and the streets are engaged by boys in the IDP site. More than two-thirds of the adult respondents narrated that male child are forced by the household head to earn money simply because of their being males. The majority of the adult respondents agree that the girls in the family are forced to perform household chores. The FGD participants explained that in their place of origin only the figureheads of the family, who are the fathers, were solely the breadwinner of the household. The majority of the children respondents concurred that, compared to the frequency of beatings they experienced from parents in their place of origin, the incidence of beating has increased since displacement which has the same findings with the adult respondents.

Unlike the majority of the females, the majority of the male child respondents reported that their parents curse them more since being displaced. Further, compared to their place of origin, the incidence of being cursed by strangers is reported to be more by the male respondents. Female respondents, however, denied that they experience more cursing by strangers after displacement.

Both male and female respondents denied seeing an increase in *badal and baad* marriages in their new community compared to their place of origin. Both male and female respondents denied seeing a decrease in *bachaBazi* cases in Kabul compared to their place of origin. Majority of the male child respondents concurred that boys are more vulnerable within IDP communities and prone to abuse in Kabul than in place of origin.

## Recommendations

### I. Gender-sensitive policy implications vis-à-vis IDP children

These research findings should be utilized as a very relevant and effective base for crafting any new law, policy and program interventions along with similar high-quality researches, and by the United Nations when revisiting the existing international laws. In Afghanistan, there is a need to revisit all laws that are anchored on international agreements, specifically the Sustainable Development Goals, CEDAW, the Beijing Platform of Action, Convention on the Rights of Children and other protocols, to ensure that these clearly respond to girls and boys and gender based violence issues, such as domestic display of aggressive behaviours, and girls and women being vulnerable to *baad* and *baadal* whole boys prone to *Bachabazi*.

### II. Programmatic Interventions

1. Disseminating the results of the study to guide policymakers in addressing issues of gender inequality and violence against IDP children that emanate from their displacement;
2. Addressing the issue on the classification of new and long-term migrants, especially , when are they classified as economic migrants by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations (MRR);
3. Protecting boys in the IDP communities through programmatic measures, e.g., promoting “back-to-school” programme, livelihood and job opportunities for displaced parents and adult members of the family among other innovative ways;
4. Enhancing existing information, education and communication campaigns regarding the protection of children and interrupting the cycle of violence. This campaign will be anchored by the Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC) and should raise community awareness of the perils of gender inequality that includes IDP children.



5. Designing schematic programmes working on IDPs that deconstruct masculinities as they pertain to gender inequality, roles of men and women, as well as violence against women and children. This is in coordination with civil society and government organisations, specifically the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA), and Ministry of Information and Communication (MoIC).
6. Finding programmatic means of addressing the cycle of violence as victims, in this case, the women who became perpetrators of physical and psycho-emotional violence;
7. Creating programs on responsible and shared parenting at the community level, e.g., “Responsible Parenthood Programme” by the NGOs, INGOs, and GOs operating in various IDP communities. These programs should address patterns of raising girls and boys that perpetuate gender roles, norms, and values that promote gender inequalities and domestic violence.
8. Tapping the educational system to inform young people regarding notions of IDP inclusion and their integration into the community.
9. Involving local key actors in the process of changing perceptions of doing away with harmful traditional practices, such as *baad*, *badal*, and the like. These actors involve community leaders who serve as community decision-makers and role models.
10. Crafting further research and study on the bachaBazi as it was noted that is happening in both places of origin and current IDP location in Kabul with some variations.
11. Increasing awareness on the boy’s abuse or bachaBazi among community members, families, and specifically children to help address this exploitation practice.
12. Providing sexual and reproductive health rights and education is imperative since reproductive health issues encompass from “cradle to grave” issues. Hence, both children and adults are afforded the opportunity as it is their basic rights, and;
13. Expanding the study to include more IDP communities, taking into consideration various ethnicities and geographical locations from where these IDPs are coming.

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