

New Joint Research Examines Gender, Intersectionality, and Protection of Civilians

GENEVA, Switzerland – 26 October 2026: This week, four international organisations — Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC), ODI Global's Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), and Fight for Humanity — will launch two joint research papers on gender and the protection of civilians, examining what gender-responsive protection looks like in practice.

The two reports, which together examine a range of protection concerns and challenges in seven countries, explore how to recognise risks across diverse civilian experiences, turn participation into real influence, and sustain approaches that communities help shape. The question at the heart of these research efforts is: what needs to change so that being seen and heard translates into being protected.

Humanitarian actors are operating in an increasingly challenging environment, marked by intertwined crises of shrinking funding, dismantling of international norms-based order, and mounting resistance to gender equality. Gender shapes how civilians experience conflict, navigate danger and protect themselves and others. Yet, protection efforts too often overlook these dynamics: men's exposure to detention and forced recruitment can go unrecognised. Women's participation can become a box-ticking exercise rather than meaningful influence over decisions that affect whole communities. The strategies civilians already use to keep each other safe often receive little support. As humanitarian funding shrinks and resistance to gender equality grows, the cost of these blind spots is rising, and so is the urgent need to address them.

The two complementary studies identify strong links between protection gaps and gender dynamics: [“CIVIC's 'When Only Certain Voices Are Heard, Protection Becomes Partial’”](#) draws on 11 focus group discussions and 134 interviews across Mali, Somalia, Ukraine and Yemen. It finds that gender consistently shapes protection risks and access, although how visible it is to protection actors varies by context. It shows that women's meaningful participation in community-based protection improves outcomes for entire communities, while also documenting the real and often under-recognised risks faced by men, including combat-adjacent violence, detention and forced recruitment.

[“Gender norms and protection: navigating agency, risk and backlash”](#), produced by HPG and Fight for Humanity, in partnership with Nonviolent Peaceforce, draws on 50 interviews with 65 people across four conflict-affected countries: Iraq, South Sudan, Myanmar, and Ukraine. It sets out some key takeaways for humanitarian and protection actors on how to include diverse community members, while recognising how intersecting aspects of people's identity shape their experiences of risk and protection. The paper also highlights how a well-funded anti-gender movement and deepening humanitarian funding cuts are constraining gender-responsive protection.

Together, the two reports connect community perspectives, humanitarian practice and policy debates. They show how the lived experience of intersecting identities interacts with the structural forces that shape agency and access to protection, offering a more complete picture than either report alone.

The research will be officially presented at a hybrid panel event, titled "Seen, Heard, Protected? Gender, Intersectionality, and the Protection of Civilians", on Thursday 29 October 2026, from 15:00 to 16:30 CET, at the Maison de la Paix in Geneva. The panel discussion will be followed by an audience Q&A and a networking reception.

A limited number of in-person places are available. To attend, please contact n.veerapen@odi.org. Further details are available at <https://odi.org/en/events/seen-heard-protected-gender-intersectionality-and-the-protection-of-civilians/>.

Quotes for immediate public use:

- Nonviolent Peaceforce: "Protection is about power, and so is gender. When gender is treated as an add-on, or as shorthand for women and girls, we miss the risks faced by men, boys and gender-diverse people, and we overlook the ways civilians are already acting to keep themselves and each other safe. These two reports show that gender-responsive, intersectional analysis is not optional. It is what makes protection work for entire communities." – Dr Felicity Gray, Global Head of Advocacy and Communications, Nonviolent Peaceforce
- Nonviolent Peaceforce: "At a time of shrinking funding and growing resistance to gender equality, it would be easy to treat this work as a luxury. It is the opposite. Communities lead their own protection, and they do so most effectively when diverse voices shape the response. Our task is to make sure that being seen and heard translates into being protected, and we hope this event leaves donors, policymakers and practitioners with concrete actions to do exactly that." – Dr Felicity Gray, Global Head of Advocacy and Communications, Nonviolent Peaceforce

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