

Women in Times of Crisis: Rethinking the Extraordinary and the Everyday

(Columbia, SciencesPo, Paris 1 - conference, 18 October 2024)

This conference provided a platform to examine critically the **multifaceted** impacts of crises on gender dynamics. By exploring themes such as climate change, gender-based violence, labour issues, political polarization, and community resistance, the conference **underscored** how crises not only exacerbate existing inequalities but also present opportunities for rethinking and reshaping societal norms.

A recurring theme across the sessions and discussions was the reversibility of social progress, particularly in the face of economic and political **upheavals**. Yet crises were highlighted as both challenges and potential catalysts for change, and the conference communications emphasized the need for proactive, inclusive policies that centre on women's experiences and **agency**. The integration of diverse perspectives—from theoretical analyses to field research and personal reflections—enriched the dialogue, offering valuable insights into the systemic nature of gendered crises and the resilience of women in navigating these challenges.

The final **plenary session** left participants with a call to action: to **leverage** existing knowledge and institutions to safeguard gender equality while addressing the structural barriers that perpetuate inequities. The conference reaffirmed the critical role of interdisciplinary research, collaborative action, and policy innovation in **fostering** more equitable and sustainable societies. As crises continue to evolve, so must strategies for resilience and transformation to ensure meaningful progress.

One area not addressed during the conference, compared to the literature review, concerns crises linked to armed conflict. These crises are less frequent, but lead to dramatic violence against women, including the systematized use of rape as an instrument of war (to break down victims' personalities and their communities), and as a means of **ethnic cleansing**.

The long-term traumatic psychological consequences of violence – be it “banal” or extreme – were only briefly touched on during the conference, probably because the conference participants were mainly specialists in economics, politics, sociology and law. In terms of the “work done” by crises, the legacy of such trauma is a major issue which requires further analysis, drawing on knowledge from specialists in psychology (and related disciplines).

The conference was also limited in the presentation of policy recommendations, although one communication set out several **toolkits** that have been developed to deal with women's specific concerns during particular types of crises. Similarly, the literature review pointed to guidelines by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) for supporting people who resort to selling sex in crisis situations. If there is one general recommendation that follows both from the conference and the literature review, it is the need for policy-makers and actors to take into account the particular needs of women in all types of crises. In the heart of crises, such concerns are often set aside due to what appear to be more pressing issues. But in doing so, crisis responses generally end up being partial.

Match the words/expressions on the left with the definitions on the right.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. Multifaceted | a/ A meeting or discussion attended by all participants of a conference, typically for major announcements or conclusions |
| 2. Underscore | b/ A sudden and significant disruption or change, often causing chaos or instability |
| 3. Upheaval | c/ Encouraging or promoting the development of something, such as ideas, relationships, or growth |
| 4. Agency | d/ Having many different aspects or features; complex and diverse |
| 5. Plenary session | e/ Practical sets of guidelines, strategies, or resources designed to address specific problems, often used in policy or humanitarian responses |
| 6. Leverage | f/ Recommendations, a set of instructions and advice on what to do |
| 7. Fostering | g/ The capacity of individuals or groups to act independently and make their own choices |
| 8. Ethnic cleansing | h/ The forced removal or extermination of a particular ethnic group from a region, often through violence |
| 9. Tool kits | i/ The use of resources, influence, or strategic actions to achieve a desired outcome |
| 10. Guidelines | j/ To emphasize or highlight the importance of something |

Answers: 1d, 2j, 3b, 4g, 5a, 6i, 7c, 8h, 9e, 10f.