**UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls**

**Questionnaire on women’s and girls’ human security in the context of poverty and inequality**

**Introduction**

The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, in preparation for its thematic report to be presented at the 53rd session of the Human Rights Council in June 2023, will be examining the topic of women’s and girls’ human security in the context of poverty and inequality. Human security can be understood as the protection from severe and critical threats encountered by persons and communities, and it encompasses economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. The human security approach means creating systems that give people the building blocks of *survival, livelihood and dignity*. Human security is comprehensive, multidimensional, context-specific, and prevention-oriented. The common understanding of the concept reached by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 2012 (A/Res/66/290) affirms that human security includes the *right* of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair, stressing that all individuals, in particular those living in *situations of vulnerability,* are entitled to an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights, and it specifically asserts that human security ‘equally considers’ *all* human rights: civil, political, economic, social and cultural. As such, the scope of this questionnaire will cover the various aspects of risks experienced by women and girls living in poverty and inequality in relation to the enjoyment and fulfilment of their human rights. Concept note was prepared to support this questionnaire.

In this regard, the Working Group would like to seek inputs from the States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders, such as National Human Rights Institutions, international economic institutions, and academic institutions or human rights clinics, to inform the preparation of the report in line with its mandate to maintain a constructive approach and dialogue with States and other stakeholders. The Working Group would greatly appreciate it if you could reply by 3 October 2022 in a Word document of no more than 2,500 words to the following email address: [hrc-wg-discriminationwomen@un.org](mailto:hrc-wg-discriminationwomen@un.org). Responses to the questionnaire will be made publicly available at the time of the report publication, unless requested otherwise.

The specific objectives of the thematic report are to:

* Identify the causes of structural discrimination in the realization of human rights, especially lack of access to economic and social rights, due to cross-cutting risk factors stemming from both gender inequality and socioeconomic inequality;
* Deepen the understanding of the implications for women’s and girls’ multiple human insecurities and vulnerability to experiencing human rights abuses primarily in the socioeconomic dimension of their lives, leading to a series of other violations, including lack of access to justice and undue/disproportionate/excessive criminalization;
* Reveal the opportunities for strengthening women’s and girls’ human security and socioeconomic equality (e.g. obligations of *prevention* of human rights’ violations by identifying risk factors and addressing known risks; norms and policies for countering women’s and girls’ poverty; norms and policies for reducing economic inequality, such as taxation, debt and redistribution measures, gendered perspective in free trade agreements, and gendered budgeting in economic and social policy);
* Identify promising approaches and make recommendations for promoting and protecting women’s and girls’ human security, through addressing their condition of poverty and socioeconomic inequality due to systemic gender-based discrimination.

*Relevant data*

1. What are the general levels of poverty in your country/region and those specifically of women and girls?

The United Nations reports show the poverty rate in Syria, which is classified as the worst country to live in. It is natural that women and children suffer the most with poverty, with the lack of a minimum standard of living and the absence of basic services, and the situation is worsening in the internal camps.

In a report on 25 June 2021, Amnesty International announced that: “More than a million people in northwest Syria are at risk of starvation and the lack of COVID-19 vaccines and other vital medicines, if the Security Council does not renew the mandate of the United Nations With regard to the situation of the camps, a statistic conducted by the “Syrian Response Coordinators” team on the humanitarian situation of the displaced people in the camps in May 2021 showed that the rate of meeting food needs and livelihoods in the camps did not exceed 45 As for the response rate to the education sector, it is only 29%. The same percentage applies to the response to the water sector as well. The residents of more than 200 camps suffer from a lack of potable water, while poverty rates have reached record levels, exceeding 90% during 2021, compared to 87% in 2019.

According to a study of the humanitarian situation in northwestern Syria, conducted by the “Reach” initiative in September 2019, during which it surveyed 1,051 “local communities” (villages and towns) within the region, most families whose monthly income does not exceed 50,000 Syrian pounds (about $80, according to the lira website today at the time), and 941 communities do not have enough income to secure their food needs.

80% of families relied on debt to secure their needs, 56% on sending their children to work, 22% on reducing the size of their meals, 11% on reducing the number of meals, and 10% on selling their property.

The sources of income for families in northwestern Syria, according to the study, ranged between 85% of dependence on unstable daily work, 84% on what they own of agricultural land, 60% on trade or industry, 14% on transfers from outside the country, and 13% Only on fixed salaries. ?

1. Which are the levels of economic inequality in your country/region? Could you present disaggregated data concerning women and girls?

Before 2011, there was no economic equality in Syria, especially in the Social Security Law and in the private sector that most exploited women, in addition to discriminatory laws that deprived women of participating in the production process due to their inability to access and manage economic resources.

The situation worsened after the start of the Syrian revolution and deteriorated further after the civil revolution turned into a war

In areas north of western Syria, most women are the heads of their families, with very difficult living conditions, whether due to the absence of a man, his disability, or the lack of job opportunities available to men, especially those with educational qualifications and the forcibly displaced or displaced persons.

Especially since the area is like a big prison because it is surrounded and flooded with Turkish goods, and the Turkish government does not allow manufactured goods to be taken out across its borders. An individual project, because the market is limited, and the amounts are not determined based on market studies. We find that successful experiences are few, and the return from the horrific is not more than securing the minimum standard of living, and often less.

According to a report issued by the Humanitarian Needs Assessment Program (HNAP) in partnership with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Early Recovery and Livelihoods Cluster” in northwest Syria in August 2021, 70% of men and 61% of unemployed women believe Regarding work in northwestern Syria and those looking for an opportunity, the lack of job opportunities is the main cause of unemployment, and that 91% of workers reside in families living in extreme poverty, which indicates the weakness of the local economy, noting that only 18% of workers The men who worked during the three months preceding the report were employed with regular income. The Livelihoods Report shows that even among people who work, nine out of ten live in extreme poverty.

The northwestern regions of Syria are witnessing a state of economic downturn as a result of the siege they are subjected to, both by the Syrian regime forces on the one hand, and the Syrian Democratic Forces on the other, in addition to the low volume of trade exchange with Turkey, which is limited to allowing the import of basic materials, and the entry of materials Relief, as the north of Syria is considered as a drainage market only. .

Economic activity in this region is reduced to commercial activity, given the proximity of these areas to the Turkish border, along with a few factories, and a group of simple industrial workshops. This activity is mainly concentrated in each of the cities of Jarabulus, al-Bab, Azaz, Afrin, Idlib, because there are five border crossings with Turkey, in addition to the agricultural activity that continues to decline due to its high costs, and the decrease in production due to the decline in arable areas, despite the efforts of civil society organizations and local administrations. To finance the activities of this sector

1. Also, please present if available, disaggregated data on the specific conditions of such women in poverty (e.g., whether they belong to an ethnic or religious minority, are indigenous, migrants, asylum-seekers, stateless or refugees).

Certainly, the forcibly displaced women and the displaced wives of the forcibly disappeared residing in the camps are always the most affected.

*Risks and structural barriers*

1. In which way are girls and women living in poverty or experiencing a situation of economic and social marginalization/disadvantage exposed to threats or risks in your country/region? In particular, in terms of:

* having difficulty with accessing social security, health care, housing, water, food, education, employment.
* There are no state institutions in all of Syria, no social and health security policies, etc. In the northwestern regions of Syria, de facto forces control the area, and there is no support for education. The dropout rate is very high, even universities are not recognized by any country in the world. Job opportunities are few due to isolation, local market tightness, population poverty, and the infeasibility of implementing medium-sized projects due to the Turkish government’s policies in the region, instability and the destruction of infrastructure.
* being in a situation of homelessness or experiencing social exclusion and economic ‘unfreedom’
* The society is dominated by customs and traditions that limit women’s professional possibilities and thus access to the labor market, but the conditions of war and poor living have forced men to accept women’s exit and work within the available civil society organizations and development organizations. We see, for example, how women constitute not a small percentage of Female civil society employees but the women's base is still dominant, working with women only. Leadership and decision-making are controlled by men
* facing violence or discrimination, or stigmatization due to living in poverty
* Society is not free from different types of violence, but it has become clear to us that women invest what they learn from capacity-building courses such as dialogue management, conflict resolution, and also meeting with others from different environments, hearing different stories from other women, all of this makes women follow the tools of passive resistance to circumvent on violence

Also, the poor living conditions and the man’s inability to provide for his family made the intervention of the men of the large family in the lives of divorced and widowed women less severe than before, because women became sources of income for the family, but women’s and women’s organizations did not work to put forward projects that build on these changes in society, and attempts remain individual and private for local initiatives

* lacking access to justice and reparations for violations of their rights

Syria still suffers from the continuation of the conflict, and in all regions of Syria, including the regime-controlled areas, there is no respect for the laws, an independent judiciary, and no justice. In cases of some stability in some cities and the possibility of redress, the costs of these procedures are high, in addition to the ignorance of women about what they have to do. Moreover, the stigma of society persecutes women who resort to the judiciary to obtain their right to inheritance, file for divorce, or complain of domestic violence.

* facing undue/disproportionate or excessive criminalization for different causes
* There is no confrontation with criminalization and unjustified violence for various reasons. Arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and torture in prisons still exist in all parts of Syria. There are limited attempts by societal and human rights and feminist organizations to document and work with United Nations mechanisms to monitor violations and punish them in the future when the conditions of the country allow that

1. What is the legal and policy framework in your country/region to address such risks and prevent human rights violations affecting women and girls in poverty?
2. There is no legal framework in all Syrian regions, nor in neighboring countries, to prevent human rights violations that affect poor women and girls and there are no current mechanisms to protect them, with the exception of self-resistance and some initiatives from the community itself and attempts by some civil society organizations and the local administration to document these risks and reduce Of which
3. Are there any particular groups of women and girls most at risk or conditions that especially determine barriers for women and girls to access such rights and why (such as by living in poverty, working in the informal labor market, unpaid care work or domestic work, migrant, asylum-seeker, refugee or stateless status, race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender identity, sexual orientation).

All the groups that were mentioned are present in all Syrian regions, and the gender dimension or gender identity is not taken into account, the female detainees in the regime’s prisons have not been released, the disappeared forcibly not disclosed, and the property is confiscated under the pretext of absence or support for terrorism, the failure to renew official documents and the failure to document new civil cases, which deprives them of all their rights. In northwestern Syria, women suffer from poverty, lack of opportunities and lack of access to resources. Only the local council in the city of al-Bab issued them personal documents so that this group can benefit from some services of civil society organizations, but this case did not generalize to the rest of the regions and in the northern regions Western Syria The Autonomous Administration has not been able to address the issues of women married to foreigners of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and their children

1. Are there laws and/or practices in your country/region which differentiate between persons on the basis of sex or gender, i.e., between girls and boys to access education, ability for men and women, both inside and outside marriage, to enter into contracts, own/administer property, purchase land and/or housing, own/administer business, and gain access to credit? If so, what are they?

The law does not discriminate in regime-controlled areas between people on the basis of race or gender, but at the level of implementation, executive instructions and control of corruption and nepotism, there is discrimination, especially the personal status law that affects women. Ownership, inheritance and unpaid domestic work and gives the man absolute authority over women inside and outside the home, and these laws are applied even in areas outside the control of the regime, in addition to the control of patriarchal customs and traditions that limit the freedom of ownership and the movement of women. And the laws issued by the Salvation Government in the city of Idlib It prevents women from education, work, and mixing, imposes a specific form of women’s dress (the niqab), and prevents women from leaving the house and traveling without a mahram

1. How would you say that structural obstacles, and ongoing phenomena or threats in your country (such as the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, ongoing conflict, etc.) impact on risks for women and girls, particularly in the way women and girls access economic and social rights?

War conditions and cutting fruitful trees for heating and displacement took away large areas of agricultural investment, and women suffer from double injustice, especially with deprivation of movement and education due to the conflict conditions and exposure to more violence due to the constant state of anxiety and repeated cases of displacement

As for the Corona pandemic, the northwest regions of Syria did not witness meaningful quarantine measures, but it certainly made women, children and all residents of these areas vulnerable to health risks due to the weakness of the health sector. Today, there is a cholera epidemic, and people are in a state of anticipation.

1. Are there any specific actors, such as business corporations, or macroeconomic norms or policies in your country/region -such as trade agreements, taxation, debt and redistribution measures- that create particular or disproportionate risks or concrete human rights violations for women and girls?

There is no state authority, the rule of law, and no institutions in all Syrian regions, and all the exchanges and trade that takes place are under the de facto authorities and war criminals that are subject to extortion, bribery, looting and the spread of drug trade. Positive for the population, especially women and marginalized groups with disabilities

1. Is there any legal framework or policy, program or part of your work, that focuses on the role of men in preventing economic risks or vulnerabilities of women and girls and/or ensuring the human rights of women in the context of poverty and inequality? Is there any that makes visible or emphasizes the benefits for the whole of society of a gender-equal and inclusive economy?

*We as an organization focus on real economic empowerment that enables women to become stronger and have access to the labor market, especially from a distance.*

*We empower women with the tools of community organization to create local initiatives that seek to change their reality by building on their resources*

*We conduct a group of research and discussions on making economic empowerment programs and everything that is presented in the region about early recovery and development support in the interest of women and children and open the way for them to participate in real life.*

*We apply some pressure through our relations with civil society to develop capacity building programs and make them more modern and away from stereotypical professions for women.*

*Promising practices*

1. What are the concrete ways in which the State –at the executive, legislative or judicial branch- addresses the situation of women and girls’ structural disadvantage in relation to economic and social rights? Are there any particular issues and platforms in which the State protects them from the systemic threats they face due to poverty and inequality?

There are the concrete ways in which the State –at the executive, legislative or judicial branch- addresses the situation of women and girl

1. How does your institution/Government/organisation contribute to ensuring girls’ and women’s access to their basic economic and social rights in your national context? Are there particular issues, platforms or levels in which the State/your institution encourage their participation, inclusion and engagement and what role does it play?
2. Could you refer to legal norms and policies for eliminating poverty, as well as for reducing economic inequality, such as taxation, debt and redistribution measures, or specific economic or social policies, and could you specify if they adopt a gendered perspective and/or if there are any specifically directed to women and girls?
3. Could you refer to any good practice or innovative measure or initiative that has helped advance women’s and girls’ socioeconomic human security?
4. How can women and girls participate in decision-making in this area?

Our work areas are outside the control of the Syrian regime and away from state institutions. Certainly, the Syrian Women's Network works with many women's groups to develop laws and how we can bring about changes in society. We work to change prevailing norms and seek to develop and build women's capacities to be able to move with its own group. The issue is in favor of the challenges they live together. We are also working to emphasize the need to involve women in local administrations and put pressure on organizations, especially developmental organizations, to give greater opportunities to women, especially in establishing individual projects.

Certainly, we seek to reflect the gender perspective, whether in their work or in the policy papers that we put forward that reflect the views of retired women.

We seek as an organization to activate women's leadership in social organizations

Training of trainers course on launching community initiatives (15 participating trainers from network members)

Establishing a referral team to communicate with the victims and survivors of violence and refer them to the specialized organizations and support centers in the states of Urfa, Gaziantep and Antakya

A training course on “participatory social research skills and the study of societal needs” for a team of researchers in the network

Preparing and designing an action plan to study the needs of Syrian women in all areas of Syrian women’s presence, which are divided into six regions worldwide, distributing roles and training on data collection tools that will be used in the research

Forming a team that adopts a comprehensive response plan to these invasions

Conducting a support and advocacy campaign to reach women who have a comprehensive response program to decision-making positions

Rewards for writers and video content creators for publishing their products with financial compensation

*International norms and policies: for UN agencies, offices and institutions, particularly international economic institutions (especially WB, IMF, WTO)*

1. Are there any policies implemented by your organization, or recommended to/applied in States, to protect women and girls from risks and sudden economic shocks derived from crises, and strengthen their resilience and that of the communities they live in?

When distributing aid, any gender dimension is not taken into account, and while determining what these materials are provided

Pressure on organizations to give women opportunities to work and to establish projects and pressure on vocational rehabilitation organizations to move away from stereotypical professions in order to expand the labor market for women and improve the level of income and diversify sources as well

Put pressure on the interim government to work on involving women in local administration so that they have a representative voice, as they are better able to define their needs and priorities.

Work to secure the necessary facilities in the camps that will contribute to greater safety and thus freedom of movement and work.

Directing and supporting local initiatives with funding because they address women’s needs is more feasible to spend than large organizations that produce papers and projects that do not touch reality and do not change it and do not work to build women’s power.

1. What are the main actions taken by your organizations to reduce poverty of women and girls and/or to reduce their levels of economic inequality?

Economic empowerment programs on finding project ideas, market study, economic feasibility, and financial knowledge, and all of this is completely voluntary

We also began to apply the approach of community organization by training groups of women to organize themselves and build their strength to work to claim their rights and face the challenges posed by the region, including economic opportunities.

We are also now working on studying a project on popular education to implement and evaluate it in the city of Afrin, which is affiliated to the Aleppo governorate, to bridge the gap in the absence of education in the hope of creating new opportunities.

1. Could you mention any concrete action adopted to promote and protect the economic and social human rights of women and girls?

The Syrian Women's Network has issued three studies on

Impact of the war on Syrian women

Obstacles to Syrian women entering the labor market in Turkey

Referral guide for survivors of violence

political empowerment courses

Participation in filing a lawsuit in Berlin to consider rape and gender-based violence as crimes against humanity

*Recommendations/ the way forward*

1. What concrete measures should States adopt and implement to eradicate poverty and tackle in particular the situation of women and girls living in poverty and the disproportionate impact poverty has on them?
2. What concrete measures should States adopt to address systemic gender-based/age-based/socioeconomic-based discrimination and challenges affecting women and girls living in situation of poverty?
3. What would be your main recommendation to advance women’s and girls’ socioeconomic human security?

Directing support to local women's and women's initiatives

Its real empowerment on the ground is the participation of women in decision-making positions by not less than 30%, and not only awareness-raising, because when women demand their rights that are guaranteed by the principles of human rights and do not have the tools of manipulation and change, male domination and attacks on feminist activists increase, and the situation of women worsens

Providing support to local initiatives working with women and living with reality

Giving work programs for civil society organizations after gendered to expand women's participation

Supporting women to access the labor market for resources and to participate in recovery and development through realistic and real economic empowerment programs

Teaching women modern professions

Expand the work on financial knowledge in line with the level of education of women

Supporting the establishment of medium-sized enterprises led by women

Coordination with political actors to pressure Turkey to allow the transit of goods from the northwest through Turkish ports, under the force of its laws and under the supervision of the Interim Government, to ensure the safety of these operations.

De facto warlords do not benefit from early recovery funds