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INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL

Unite to End Violence against Women

International Committee of the Red Cross: Women and War Talking Points
The Impact of Conflict on Women

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

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3. *International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights and Refugee Law afford*
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the International Criminal Court (ICC). Crimes of sexual violence have attained more visibility and received marked importance in terms of prosecution under humanitarian law. Prohibitions of rape and other forms of sexual violence must be included in national law and in the military codes and training manuals of arms bearers. Sexual violence is prohibited against men, women, girls or boys. Breaches of this law and of instructions given to arms bearers must be appropriately punished. Rape is preventable; this must be recognised and realized.

Ø ***There must be a more comprehensive response to sexual violence.***

Victims of sexual violence need rapid access to appropriate and adequate medical care (including pre- and postnatal care for those who have become pregnant) and may need counselling. In order to avoid the risk of ostracism or punishment because they have been the victim of sexual violence (a very real risk in many communities), victims need an appropriate environment in which to relate and report their experiences. Their situation needs to be handled confidentially and sensitively, taking into account their cultural background, preferably by trained female staff (for women and girls), including interpreters.

- Ø In the field of dissemination of international humanitarian law, greater efforts should be made to improve and increase dissemination of the rules concerning the protection of women and the prohibition of sexual violence at all times among parties to an armed conflict. These rules also apply to peacekeeping forces.

6. *The situation of women in armed conflict*

Female Head of Households:

infrastructure, which can result in the collapse of even essential services. For example, maternal health services are rarely available in conflict. In developing countries, pregnancy and childbirth are major causes of death, illness, and disability among women.

- Ø Socio-cultural factors can also render access more difficult. In certain cultures they are not permitted to travel unless accompanied by their husband or male family member. Indeed, lack of awareness compounds lack of access, for example higher rates of illiteracy and less contact with the public sphere may mean that women and girls do not get enough information regarding the threat of mines for example, or health services available.