



Save the
Children

GLOBAL GIRLHOOD REPORT 2024

FRAGILE FUTURES

GIRLS' RIGHTS, CHILD MARRIAGE

AND FRAGILITY

**MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA AND
EASTERN EUROPE REGIONAL BRIEF**

Contents



Part 1: Introduction	3
Part 2: Child marriage and fragile settings	7
Part 3: Girls' experiences of fragility in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe	11
Part 4: The way forward	15
Endnotes	20

The global version of this brief and other regional briefs are available [here](#), including Arabic, English, French and Spanish translations.



A note on language



This report is written to give governments, non-government organisations, the UN and activists, including girls, the evidence they need to work together to tackle the impact of fragility on gender-equality. It is intended to be 'adolescent-friendly' so that girls can use it to demand action.

We use the term 'girl' throughout this report. This often refers to statistics based on sex rather than gender but if there are experiences in this report that feel familiar to you or someone you care about, this report is meant for you and to raise awareness among others.

Names marked * have been changed to protect anonymity

Part 1: Introduction



On average, girls today are better educated, more likely to survive to adulthood and be free to make decisions about their own lives and bodies than generations of girls before them. Yet every crisis threatens to reverse progress, and persistent inequalities, the climate emergency, conflicts and anti-rights backlash around the world mean that girls' lives will continue to be shaped by a cycle of crisis and recovery. Over time this cycle makes the systems communities rely on for healthcare, safety, protection, education and income weaker and more easily broken – more *fragile*.

What is fragility?

Under international law, all governments have a duty to ensure the rights of the people in their country. This is why governments are sometimes referred to as 'duty bearers' for human rights and the people in their country are 'rights holders'. Experts define 'fragility' in different ways, but most agree that **a country or area is fragile when the government is not fulfilling its responsibilities as a duty bearer responsible, for example, for making and enforcing laws or managing the economy and the services that people need to be safe and healthy.**¹ This could be due to lack of ability or resources, lack of control in parts of the country, or unwillingness to provide services.² Fragile countries might also be affected by conflict and humanitarian disasters more often than more stable countries.

Many countries are caught between ongoing internal or external conflicts and long-term efforts to build, with institutions like courts and parliaments that remain very weak, and areas affected by widespread violence and lawlessness. Fragile countries can move back and forth between levels of fragility.



Aslı*, 9, with her favourite doll. Her family's house in Adıyaman province, Türkiye, was destroyed in an earthquake

PHOTO: ANSE NUR GENÇALP/SAVE THE CHILDREN TÜRKİYE

Box 1: 'Fragility': A useful idea with some important problems



The word 'fragile' can make it sound as if some countries are fragile and others are not. This is not true. There are risk factors for fragility in all countries (for example discrimination and inequalities between people) that all governments need to work to improve.³

The word 'fragile' is typically used by wealthy countries to describe lower-income countries that were colonised – for example they were invaded, controlled or had their resources taken – by those wealthier countries. Labelling a country 'fragile' can help wealthier countries justify continuing to intervene in the way those lower-income countries are run.⁴ Research also shows that being colonised can increase the likelihood of fragility – research shows countries that were colonised are 50 times more likely to have high rates of intimate partner violence.⁵

It is critical that work on fragility and girls' rights addresses these problems. For example, by:

- ★ finding ways to reduce risk-factors for fragility and its impacts in *all* countries and
- ★ ensuring that support to manage fragility prioritises national and community-level solutions by strengthening governments and communities in those countries rather than imposing solutions from outside, in line with guidance like [the Grand Bargain](#) (an agreement between big donors and humanitarian agencies on how to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian responses).

These 'problems' are particularly relevant to stereotypes in some contexts, particularly in the Global North, that present Middle Eastern countries (and their people) as inevitably locked in never-ending conflict. These stereotypes have been fuelled by prevalent media portrayals and racist tropes, Islamophobic biases and the history of the region. This thinking fails to consider the current and historical factors driving conflict in the region, many of which are linked to interference by colonising countries or replicate the ways they operated, exerting control over less powerful countries and their resources.

At Save the Children we use the word fragility because of its widespread use in most of the research on this subject, despite its complicated history and ongoing use.

What can cause fragility?

Sometimes a crisis sparks a period of fragility, for example:

- ★ Violence – such as war with another country or violence between groups inside a country, for example violence carried out by groups trying to take over government, organised criminal groups that governments can't control, or widespread protests by people who are unhappy with government decisions and the services they provide, who believe there is no other way to create change.
- ★ Disasters – including climate-related disasters like floods and fires or other disasters like earthquakes that can significantly affect most aspects of daily life.
- ★ Economic crises, including rising prices that lead to people not having the money they need to look after themselves and governments not having enough money to provide essential services.

Sometimes, the build-up of challenges over time can make countries increasingly fragile. For example, a country may struggle with high levels of poverty and inequality (including gender inequality) as well as more frequent climate disasters that cost people their income and increase their reliance on government support – support that the government may not be able to provide effectively due to costs, capacity, political will or other factors. As people become more desperate, they may have to compete to access things like food, water, housing and education, particularly where the government and a small number of powerful people have a lot while the rest of the population has very little. These challenges mount up, making it harder to recover from every new crisis and harder for the government to deliver what people need.

The build-up of challenges over time can make countries increasingly fragile



How does fragility affect girls and their rights?



Under international law, all girls have the right to be safe, healthy, get a safe, good quality education, and make decisions about their own lives.⁶ To realise these rights they need access to services like schools, food, and healthcare, as well as protective laws, that are enforced. Governments should provide all these things. In fragile countries, governments are often unable to afford or effectively provide these services or enforce laws, which means many girls are denied their rights.

Fragile countries are also often affected by crises like wars and climate disasters. Research shows that crises can increase **gender inequality and gender-based violence** (see Box 2). This can affect girls in different ways, shaped by factors like their race, where they live, class and disability. These power differentials can overlap or 'intersect' with inequalities based on girls' age and gender.⁷

Intersecting inequalities that exist before a crisis mean that girls are often less prepared for the consequences of a crisis. For example, they may be less likely to have been sent to school and taught about how to stay safe in a crisis than boys.

Loss of income, chaos and overcrowding in the immediate aftermath of a crisis can increase girls' risk of exposure to violence.

Box 2: Gender inequality, gender equality, patriarchy and gender-based violence



Gender inequality is the unfair treatment of people because of their gender. This includes their gender identity, what other people assume about their gender, and the way that they express that gender, for example the way they dress. This treatment can lead to unequal access to power, opportunities, rights and resources.

Gender equality refers to the equal enjoyment by women, girls, men and boys – of all ages, sexual orientations and gender identities – of rights, opportunities, resources, rewards and quality of life.⁸

Gender inequality usually privileges men and boys and is closely linked to patriarchy.

Patriarchy is a word that covers the beliefs, ways of living and working that give men and boys power over women, girls and others who disagree with those ideas.

Gender-based violence is violence used against a person because of their gender. It is used to reinforce patriarchy, power imbalances and restrictive ideas about how people should behave to be considered 'good' men, boys, women or girls (these restrictive ideas are called **gender norms**). Gender-based violence can include physical, economic, sexual and emotional (psychological) abuse.⁹ Child marriage is a form of gender-based violence.

Part 2: Child marriage and fragile settings

Child marriage: A result and a driver of gender inequality

Child marriage is a form of gender-based violence and an abuse of human rights.¹⁰ UNICEF (the United Nations organisation that leads work for children's rights) defines child marriage as *any marriage or union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child* (a union is a relationship like a marriage that is not legally or formally recognised).¹¹

Girls who marry as children may be denied the right to choose if, when and who to marry. They often drop out of school early to start having children and can be isolated from friends and family.¹² Adolescent pregnancy puts girls at higher risk of birth and pregnancy complications, the leading cause of death for girls aged 15–19 years.¹³ Girls who are married are also more likely to face gender-based violence throughout their lives, including from their husband and members of his family.¹⁴

Despite progress to reduce child marriage, around 12 million girls still marry each year, 2 million before their 15th birthday.¹⁵ Child marriage can affect children of any gender but estimates suggest that girls are six times more likely to be married as children than boys.¹⁶



Save the Children has supported Marine* and her three siblings with Mental Health and Psychosocial Support activities at a Child Friendly Space in Armenia

PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN/
PARTNERSHIP AND TEACHING

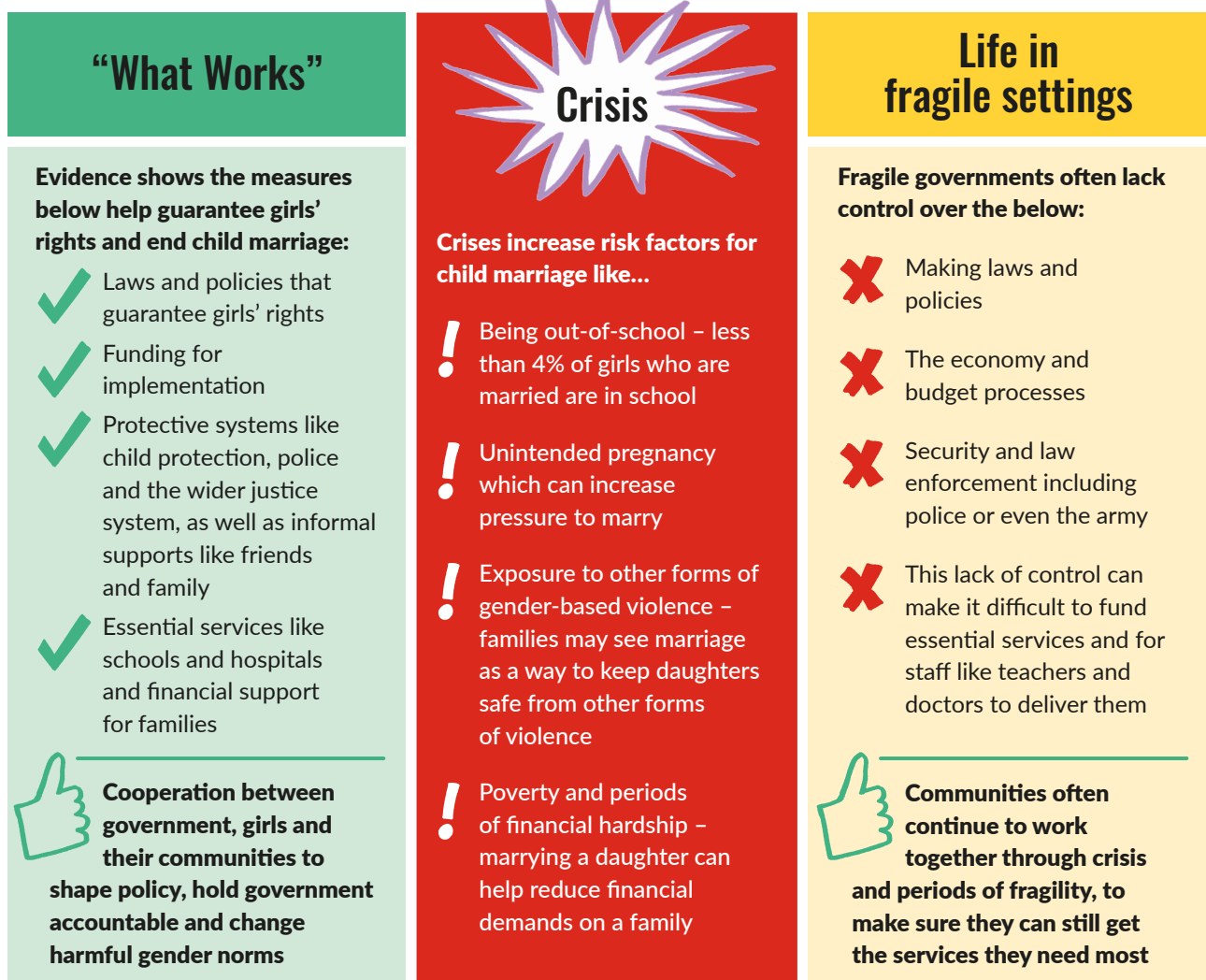
What is the connection between fragility and child marriage?

Fragility increases risks to girls' rights including risk factors for child marriage

More than half of the countries with the highest rates of child marriage are considered 'fragile'.¹⁷

Fragility does not cause child marriage or unions but fragility is often driven by crises like conflict, climate disasters or economic shocks that increase common *risk factors* for child marriage.¹⁸ Those risk factors might include breakdown of protective systems (including through separation from family), being out-of-school or pregnant outside marriage.¹⁹ Crises also increase girls' exposure to other forms of gender-based violence and create financial pressure for families – these circumstances can push families to

Figure 1: Governments in fragile settings face the dual challenge of needing to do more to protect girls' rights at a time when they are less able to deliver that support



consider child marriage as a way to help make sure that their daughters are kept safe or provided for by another family.²⁰ Unfortunately this decision exposes girls to the harmful experiences associated with child marriage.

Ensuring girls' rights requires long-term prevention and action, collaboration between different groups, and funding for services and the people needed to deliver them.²¹ For example, preventing child marriage and ensuring the rights of married, widowed and divorced girls, and girls wanting to leave marriages or unions requires:²²

- ★ different government ministries like health, sport, education, justice and finance to work together with each other and communities, including girls
- ★ clear laws, policies or strategies that take account of the ways that age and gender affect needs and the way girls are treated, to help coordinate the above groups and make sure they have the people and budget they need
- ★ aligned commitment at national, sub-national, and international levels to promote girls' rights
- ★ reliable, long-term support for all of the above because many of the changes needed, such as changing gender norms about marriage and girls' rights, can take a long time.



Governments in fragile settings often lack the ability or resources needed to make laws, fund services like healthcare, food, and schools, and coordinate the many different people and organisations that need to work together for change. This means that girls who are already married or forced to be married may have limited or no support to meet their needs or rights in case they want to leave the marriage.

New data: Child marriage–fragility hotspots

New analysis by Save the Children shows that globally, 32 million adolescent girls are currently living in child marriage–fragility hotspots. These girls face the dual risk of child marriage and the challenges associated with fragility.

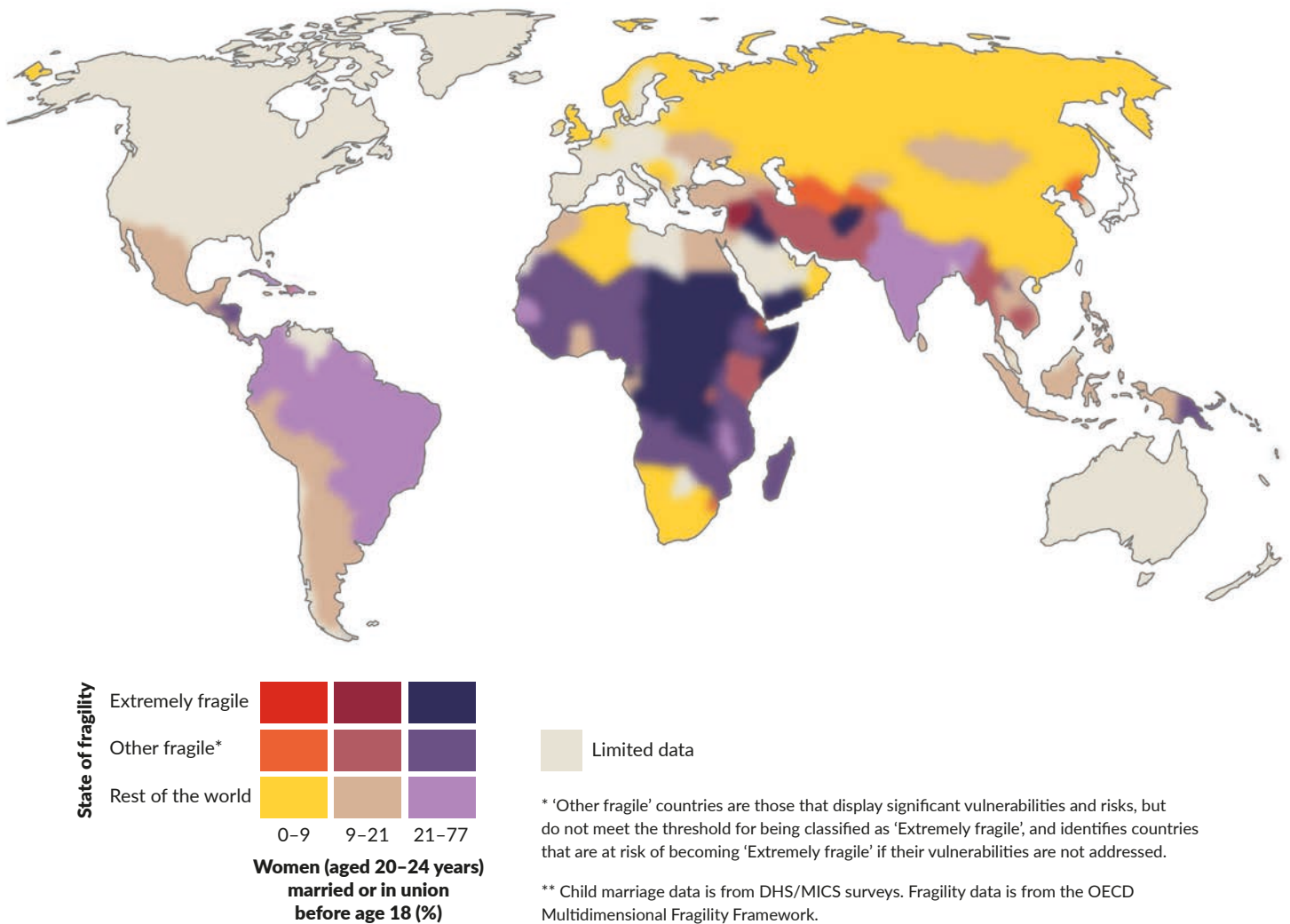
In extremely fragile countries around the world:

- ★ Two girls marry every minute.
- ★ Almost 558,000, or one in four girls gives birth before her 18th birthday.
- ★ 5.9 million girls are refugees or 'living in refugee-like circumstances'.²³
- ★ More than two-thirds of girls in their mid to late teens (the age when they face the greatest risk of child marriage) are out of school, denied their right to education.

Child marriage in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe

There are 40 million “child brides” in the Middle East and North Africa.²⁴ In Eastern Europe, the rates vary, with 23% officially registered marriages of girls aged 15 to 19 in Türkiye, while half of all Roma women aged 20–24 were married before the age of 18 in some parts of the Balkans.²⁵ It is worth noting that these figures are likely much higher, as many child marriages remain unregistered.²⁶ These numbers rise when combined with forced migration. For example, the rate for child marriage amongst Syrian refugees in Türkiye is 44%.²⁷

Figure 2: Child marriage–fragility hotspots where girls face high rates of child marriage and the challenges associated with fragility



Part 3: Girls' experiences of fragility in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe

Box 3: A note on the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe



This brief brings together information on countries in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe. These areas are different in many ways and often seen as two or three separate regions. They are grouped together in this brief in part due to some shared experiences and geography, and also because Save the Children presently coordinates work across over 14 countries in these regions through a single regional office. This brief presents an overview, some of the causes of fragility and some of the girls' experiences described in this brief will be common to multiple countries, while others may apply to only select countries and with important differences.

Major causes of fragility in the region

Among the countries in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe ranked as most fragile, the top drivers of fragility are related to political instability. Other common reasons for fragility include security threats, economic decline, inequalities in who holds power, and loss of trust in government.²⁸ In Eastern Europe specifically, the rise of far-right nationalist populism has combined with a number of these factors to intensify fragility in the region.²⁹

Political instability in this region is often characterised by disputes between different groups of people. This may look like fighting amongst 'political elites', small groups of people who hold disproportionate amounts of power. It can also take the form of oppression or division of groups, including different religious or Indigenous



communities. In some fragile states with political instability, leaders are using national pride to divide communities, for example along ethnic, class, clan, racial and/or religious lines, leading to violence and inequality.

Security threats like war, conflict between groups within a country and terrorist attacks can make a country fragile very quickly. For example, Ukraine went from being ranked the world's 92nd most fragile country in 2022 to the 22nd in 2024 due to the war, according to the Fund for Peace's Fragile States Index.³⁰ Meanwhile the occupied Palestinian Territory rose from the 34th to the 13th most fragile country in the world following the war in Gaza.³¹

Economic decline is common in fragile countries and is both a cause and a consequence of security threats and government instability. Economic decline can include things like job losses, countries stopping production of products they usually sell to other countries, shrinking government budgets, rising prices and local currency becoming less valuable. These can increase poverty, put a strain on families and lead to growing anger at the government's inability to support people.

Human rights are critical to stable societies and many can help governments to maintain trust, create good policies and deliver services in a way that benefits everyone in a country equally. These rights include right to speak out against government decisions and the rights of different groups of people to be safe from violence, protected and treated fairly by the law and law enforcement systems like police and the courts. When these human rights are abused, for example by governments that allow violence against groups who are discriminated against or use violence themselves to prevent people from speaking out against their decisions, a country becomes more fragile and less safe.

Human rights violations and disrespect for international laws are common features of fragility in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe. Examples include denial of education, access to information, shrinking civic spaces, torture and imprisonment of people who speak out against governments and invasion of other countries. Leaders in some cases have taken advantage of fragility to crack down on freedom of speech and democracy, making their countries even more fragile.

External intervention has been a common driver of fragility throughout the history of the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe. External intervention refers to influence by governments and others from outside a country over the way it is run. In some cases, interventions are a response to fragility, for example governments being overthrown, or a government might argue that they need to help overthrow the government of another country because it is a danger to its own people or those in other countries. Over time, even supportive interventions, including by international non-governmental organisations, can *contribute* to fragility by taking over a fragile government's responsibilities without improving their ability to take back control of essential services, security and running the country. Governments and corporations with business interests in a country can even intervene in order to



make a country more fragile and increase their power over its people and resources, for example through:

- ★ invasion, attacks and efforts to take control over parts of the country, or
- ★ by supporting different groups within a country to increase power among those that best support the outside group's interests.



Girls' experiences of fragility

More than 64.6 million girls aged 10–19 live in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe.³² Girls' experiences of fragility in this region are diverse, but there are some common themes.

Migration and internal displacement, particularly as a result of conflict forcing girls and their families to flee their homes, is a common consequence of fragility and a potential driver where movements of people create additional demands on services. Over 1 million Palestinians have been displaced in Gaza due to the war since October 2023.³³ In Ukraine, 56% of the 3.7 million internally displaced people are women and girls.³⁴

Gender-based violence. Conflict and fragility increase women and girls' experiences of gender-based violence. Women and girls in fragile parts of the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe have been subjected to human trafficking, sexual exploitation, violence from partners and other family members, 'honour' killings and discriminatory laws,³⁵ as well as attacks on girls' education.³⁶

"Now is not the time to talk about gender". Girls in fragile countries in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe have seen their rights deprioritised. Despite the dangers that fragility poses for girls, societies struggling with crisis often treat girls' rights as something that can be put aside until things get better. Governments may take the opportunity to shut down spaces for free discussion of ideas in public and online, threatening girls' ability to advocate for their rights safely and denying them the proven benefits of taking shared action to create change for gender equality with individuals and groups, independent of government.³⁷

Protests have often been linked to fragility in the region. Women and girls have been at the centre of some historic protests, calling for their rights, often where they lack the political power to enforce those rights through formal processes. Despite women and girls being central to uprisings against corruption and oppression across the Middle East and North Africa between 2010 and 2012 (the period known as the 'Arab Spring') and the hope that period offered for women and girls' political power, the aftermath saw female activists silenced, harassed and even assassinated.³⁸ In Iran in 2022, country-wide protests by women and girls following the murder of a girl and young woman arrested by 'morality police' were in some cases met by police violence.³⁹



Rather than enabling a return to stability, abuses of women's and girls' rights, including crackdowns on activists and other forms of gender inequality, contribute to fragility. Research shows that women's involvement in negotiations to end conflict increases the likelihood of lasting peace – a critical consideration for countries in this region managing past and ongoing conflicts.⁴⁰



PHOTO: OKSANA PARAFENIUK/
SAVE THE CHILDREN

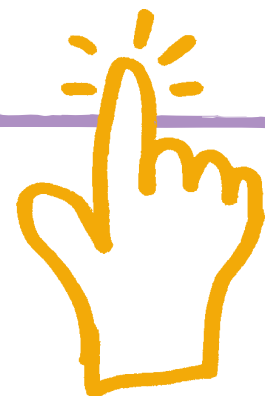
Alia*, 11, poses for a portrait with twins Polina* and Nastia*, 10, in Bucharest, Romania. All three girls became refugees when the war in Ukraine made their once stable country fragile, almost overnight.

Case study: In their own words – Ukrainian girls on forced migration

When the war escalated in Ukraine in 2022, life in the country changed instantly for girls like Alia*, 11, Nastia*, 10 and Polina*, 10. “I didn’t plan to leave Ukraine until the very last minute”, Alia’s mother Margot explains. “Everything happened so fast and suddenly” she says, “a missile struck not far from our home, and my husband told me not to wait any more; get things ready and leave. That night I called to get on an evacuation train”. The train took Margot and Alia to Bucharest, Romania – there Alia has had to learn a new language, start at a new school, make new friends and find a new place to live. “When I arrived in Bucharest, I didn’t like it at first. It was all different. Different people, a different language... I couldn’t connect with people. But after some time, I felt better in Romania. I like it here now,” says Alia.

In addition to forcing families like Alia’s to flee their homes for safety, the full-scale war transformed Ukraine from a relatively stable country to extremely fragile. The war has also had devastating flow-on effects for other countries, described as ‘cascading fragility’.⁴¹ The war itself, interruptions to food production and rising energy prices combined with the ongoing economic impacts of COVID-19 and the worsening climate crisis. Many of these impacts are considered risk factors or drivers of fragility and countries already considered fragile have been the worst affected.⁴²

Part 4: The way forward



New guidance is needed to support girls' rights in fragile settings

Existing guidance does not reflect the realities of life in fragile places

A lot of the guidance on how to support girls' rights – including how to address child marriage – does not consider the realities of life in a fragile setting. It is based on assumptions that:

- ★ governments have the ability, resources and will to make and implement laws, policies and budgets, and
- ★ conditions in a country stay stable over a long enough period of time for these efforts to make a difference.

For governments, civil society organisations and communities (including girls) in fragile settings the available guidance can feel unrealistic and unhelpful: they need guidance that reflects the challenges they face, so they can work better together for girls' rights.

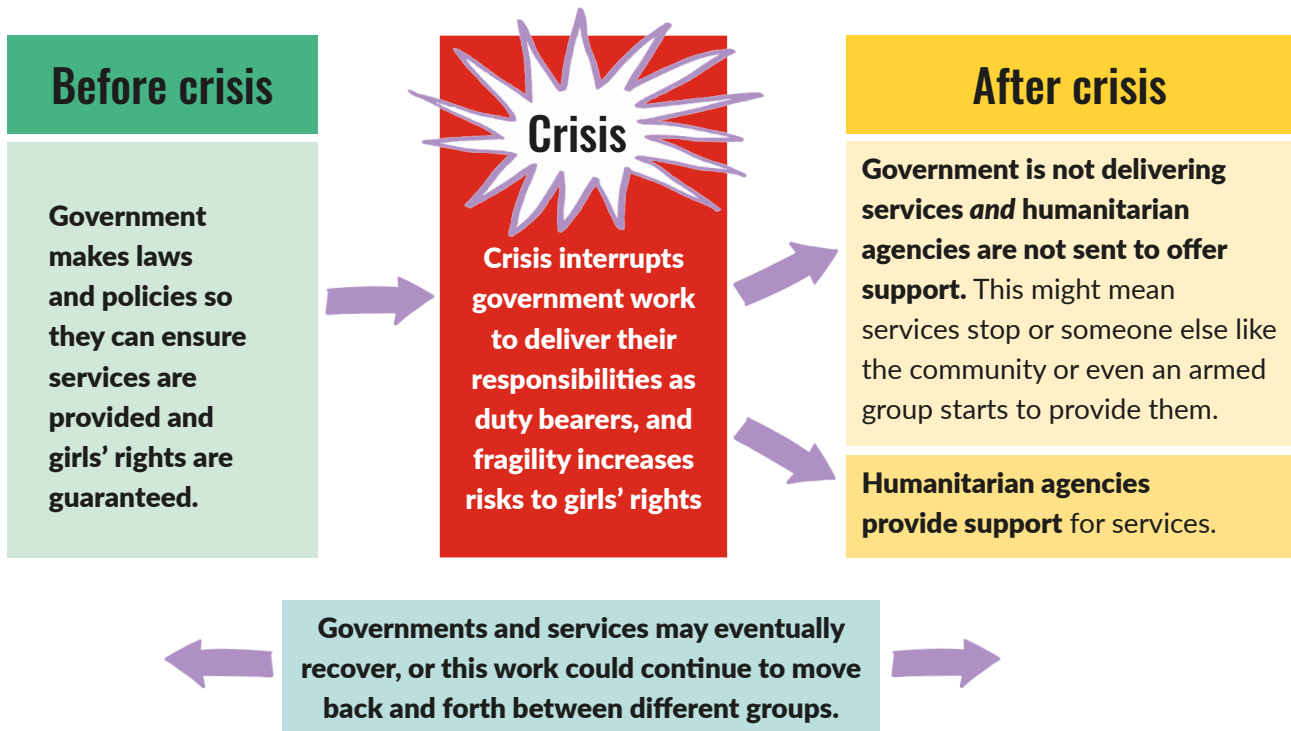
Fragile countries can move in and out of humanitarian crisis

Fragile countries may be affected by conflict and humanitarian disasters more often than more stable countries. Humanitarian settings sometimes require outside help from other countries or non-government organisations because the government and systems that provide healthcare, education, protection, safe drinking water, food or housing have been damaged or overwhelmed. In this way, conflict and humanitarian crises can increase fragility. Countries can move back and forth between:

- ★ times when outside support is provided, for example by humanitarian agencies
- ★ times when the government is unable to fulfil its responsibilities but no humanitarian support is provided
- ★ times when services recover, and the government can start to fulfil its duty to ensure human rights.

Guidance for supporting girl's rights in *humanitarian* settings does exist. It is intended for areas experiencing the worst impacts of a crisis, often in the immediate aftermath of a disaster or during conflict – when humanitarian agencies are supporting essential services. Guidance for *fragile* settings should help manage these shifts between who is providing essential services, whether that is governments or humanitarian agencies and civil society organisations (see Figure 3 on the next page).

Figure 3: In fragile countries, who is delivering or supporting essential services can move back and forth between government, humanitarian agencies and other groups



All countries can work to reduce fragility and its impacts on girls' rights

Drivers of fragility can also act as early warning signs that can be addressed to prevent a country becoming more fragile. These signs can include:⁴³

- ★ **conditions that make conflict (violent or non-violent) more likely** within a community, such as power sitting with a small group of people so that it feels impossible for people outside that group to create change, and inequalities between different groups (including gender equality).
- ★ **security challenges**, including poor policing, terrorist attacks, attempted coups (overthrow of the government), high levels of crime and owning weapons.
- ★ **issues that affect a country's wealth** such as unstable or rising costs of living, some groups or areas of a country having more resources or opportunities to earn money than others, and high levels of migration out of a country so that there are too few people left with the qualifications needed to deliver critical services (like doctors).
- ★ **political challenges** like poor service delivery, abuses of human rights (particularly by the government) and loss of trust in the government to do its job.

★ **changing population needs** that governments cannot keep up with, for example due to forced migration as a result of violence or climate change ('environment' is one of the six dimensions of the OECD's Multidimensional Fragility Framework).⁴⁴

★ **intervention by outside countries**, such as invasions, providing support (for example during humanitarian disasters), and efforts to influence government decisions and who holds power.

Every country faces at least some of these risk factors and it is possible to take action to stop them from getting worse and making a country more fragile.

For example, actions can be taken ahead of a predicted crisis to prevent or reduce its impact, before it occurs. These actions could include identifying risks, developing ways to predict future crises and early warning systems, putting plans in place for when a crisis does hit, and making sure that each of these steps is funded.⁴⁶

Steps can be taken to reduce fragility and prevent it from becoming more severe by:

- ★ addressing drivers of fragility early, for example by reducing inequalities, corruption and abuses of human rights.
- ★ preparing for climate disasters (including through climate adaptation)⁴⁷ and other humanitarian crises, drawing on lessons learned from disaster risk reduction approaches.
- ★ increasing investment to support governments to meet growing population needs before they become overwhelming.
- ★ making sure that outside interventions intended to support fragile countries do not worsen risk factors for fragility. They must prioritise strengthening governments and communities to lead design and delivery of solutions.

Community engagement and working toward gender equality must be at the centre of all these efforts.⁴⁸

Gender equality is a core component of understanding how well a country or community is prepared to cope with challenges. Gender inequalities can make crises more serious and more likely and leave governments less prepared to respond. Simply put, countries suffering from gender inequality are more likely to be fragile. This makes gender equality critical to addressing fragility.⁴⁵






Recommendations

Fragility is a risk factor for child marriage and other abuses of girls' rights, a barrier to achieving [Sustainable Development Goal 5 \(Gender Equality\)](#) and a threat that could reverse progress to-date. With fragility increasing around the world, urgent collaboration is needed to find better ways to defend girls' rights and accelerate progress toward gender equality. Save the Children recommends:

- 1 Strengthen governments as duty bearers**
All efforts to address risk factors for fragility and its consequences must ultimately enable governments to take full responsibility for ensuring the rights of all people within their country, supported by policies, funding and resources for implementation and service delivery.
- 2 Address fragility in *all* countries**
Governments in all countries should act to address risk factors for fragility, with a focus on gender inequality and intersecting forms of discrimination and power differentials like disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity and family income.⁴⁹
- 3 Increase investment in fragile countries**
Governments, UN agencies, civil society organisations and donors should urgently increase investment in fragile countries, guided by the commitment to localisation (ensuring that those who are affected participate meaningfully in making decisions impacting their needs) under [the Grand Bargain](#).
- 4 Build new coalitions**
Governments, UN and humanitarian agencies, donors and civil society, including international non-government organisations (INGOs), grassroots feminist, girl-led and women's rights groups, girls and communities must build new coalitions with a focus on addressing the impacts of fragility, bringing together groups that usually work in either humanitarian crises or low-income (developing) countries.
- 5 Develop and implement guidance based on 'what works'**
These new coalitions should collaborate to improve guidance for ensuring girls' rights in fragile countries, building on existing evidence of 'what works' by:

 - a. Putting gender equality at the centre of legal, policy and programme development and implementation. Girls need fully-funded laws, policies, programmes and services to guarantee their rights by responding to their needs and experiences of inequality and discrimination based on age, gender and other intersecting aspects of their identities (meaning that they are age-sensitive and gender-responsive at a minimum).⁵⁰

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- b. Investing in feminist, girl-led and women's rights organisations to strengthen movements independent of government so that they can lead their own agendas and hold governments and other members of these coalitions accountable to communities.
- c. Recognising girls as experts in their own lives by ensuring girls have the ways and means to safely and meaningfully advocate for and feed into research on their experiences, the development of policy, humanitarian interventions and funding decisions to support implementation in line with the right to have their views given 'due weight in decisions that affect them' under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.⁵¹
- d. Building on emerging understandings of how to reduce the impact of a crisis before it happens and make national systems – like health, education and law enforcement – more resilient (better able to survive or keep working through crises).

6 Learn and innovate

Governments and donors must increase investment to enable safe, ethical and systematic research, data collection and evaluation of innovative approaches to ensuring girls' rights and addressing child marriage in fragile countries.



Children in Rafah, Gaza, collect shells on the beach

Endnotes

- ¹ Based on definitions from the World Bank, OECD's International Network on Conflict and Fragility and Fund for Peace.
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- ⁷ See Save the Children (2022) [Gender and Power Analysis: A child-centred and intersectional approach](#).
- ⁸ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2017) [Policy: Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action](#).
- ⁹ This definition is based on the Government of Canada's [Gender-Based Violence Glossary](#).
- ¹⁰ Article 24(3), [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (1989).
- ¹¹ UNICEF (2023) ["Child Marriage"](#).
- ¹² Save the Children (2021) [Preventing and Responding to Child, Early and Forced Marriages and Unions: Technical Guidance](#).
- ¹³ WHO (2024) [Adolescent Health](#).
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- ¹⁶ UNICEF (2019) [Child Marriage among boys: A global overview of available data](#).
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Cover photo: Lana*, 12, holds a robot at a Save the Children Learning through Play session in Jordan. Photo: Nadeem Abdelsamad/Save the Children