



Impact of War in Ukraine on Women Globally

Concept Note

To capture women's voices and lived realities worldwide and to bring feminist analysis to emerging global trends, BFW (BRICS Feminist Watch) in partnership with WIDE +, AIDOS, Focus on the Global South and its members Gen Dev, Inequality Movement, Espaço Feminista, and PWESCR will host a two part online seminar on ***the Impact of War in Ukraine on Women Globally***. Phase 1 of the webinar will have diverse women's voices, especially from Europe and the global North, to share their experiences. Phase 2 of the webinar will focus particularly on voices, experiences and analysis of women and girls from the global South. The two-part online Seminars aim to bring together women's lived realities and feminist analysis around the world in context of the war in Europe and an increasing militarism worldwide. The events will be a space to raise concerns from diverse perspectives and to build feminist solidarity against the war and disturbing emerging global trends.

"War" is a highly gendered subject. The gendered experience of war depends on various factors, including individuals, communities and country-level positions and situations¹. Whatever the perspective we have or the geographic area where we find ourselves, we have to recognize the dangerous rise of militarism as well as of the masculinist hegemonic patriarchy present in this war. The invasion of Russia into Ukraine has resulted in the innocent targeting of civilians, inflicting terrible harm on people, with women and girls worst affected². Civil society in Russia, particularly human rights and feminist activists are being repressed and women's rights agendas are suffering a formidable setback in all involved countries. Those who oppose this brutal militarization, who are a hope for future democratic changes in the country, are being ostracized internally, excluded internationally, repressed, pushed out of the country, and they often face discrimination in the countries of the global North.

For example, Belarus, a neighboring country of Russia, experienced over the last two years one of the most brutal crack downs in its recent history on any form of dissent or disobedience. It not only turned into an aggressor in this war, but turned its citizens into hostages that have no say on the destiny of their own territory. While the European sympathy and support - fairly and understandably - goes to Ukraine, the reality of people in Belarus became a terror with weekly arrests and a loss of political independence from Russia's will.

The war is also having a massive impact on the global supply chain, impeding the flow of goods, fuelling dramatic cost increases and product shortages, and creating catastrophic food shortages worldwide³. *Following Russia's invasion of*

¹ Kutz-Flamenbaum, Rachel, "The Gendered Impact of War Sociologists for Women in Society Social Action Committee Fact Sheet", Accessed August 08, 2022. https://socwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/fact_fall2006-impact-of-war.pdf

² Khullar, Akanksha. "The Ukraine Crisis: Women Are Fighting a Different Kind of War." ORF. Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-ukraine-crisis-women-are-fighting-a-different-kind-of-war/>.

³ Stackpole, Beth. "Ripple Effects from Russia-Ukraine War Test Global Economies." MIT Sloan. Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://mitsloan.mit.edu/ideas-made-to-matter/ripple-effects-russia-ukraine-war-test-global-economies>.

*Ukraine, global energy markets have been in turmoil*⁴. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, 2022, states that about 71 million people around the world are experiencing poverty as a result of the increasing food and energy crisis that has been occurring since Russia's invasion of Ukraine⁵. Globally, 60 per cent of the poorest countries are in debt distress or at a high risk of debt distress⁶. The crisis is rapidly constraining household budgets. It impacts poverty levels, incomes, educational attainment, global food and energy access, malnutrition, and loss of jobs around the world. These implications are highly vicious and impact mostly on women and girls and on the poorest households⁷. The countries in the global South - mainly in the regions of South Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America- will be the worst hit due to the pre-existing vulnerabilities and sluggish economies resulting from the pandemic, combined with disruptions in energy, food, and commodities⁸.

This avoidable war's devastating impact is being felt not just in eastern Europe but across the developing world. The Sri Lanka crisis is a shocking, traumatic economic, social, and political experience causing the bankruptcy of the country, due to the post pandemic economic slow-down, poor governance, and corruption and exasperated by the Ukraine war. Inflation in Sri Lanka surged to 61 per cent in July, 2022⁹. The country doesn't have enough fuel for essential services like buses, trains and medical vehicles¹⁰ nor does it have funds to buy fuel at such high prices in the global markets. *Russia and Ukraine provide 45% of Sri Lanka's wheat imports and Sri Lanka imports more than half of its soybean, sunflower, and pea oil from Ukraine*. According to the latest food insecurity assessment from the World Food Programme (WFP), around 6.26 million Sri Lankans, or three in 10 households, are unsure about their next meal including pregnant women¹¹.

Similar experiences and impact of war are visible in African countries and African families. *The cost of wheat per ton, which Kenya heavily depends on Russia and Ukraine, has increased to \$460 per ton from \$345 per ton*¹². The direct impacts of the crisis in Africa include trade disruption, food and fuel price spikes, macroeconomic instability, and security challenges. There are also indirect impacts of the problem, including inflation, difficult energy transitions, and a potential geopolitical realignment. Countries like Senegal are highly dependent on food and fuel imports and are the most vulnerable to increases in poverty¹³. Zimbabwe is also feeling the brunt of the war with the hike in crude oil prices. However, women stand to be affected the most, as it affects their income generation activities, affects their budgets etc¹⁴. The effect in South Asia is visible in terms of economic turmoil and political domain. Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar, Maldives and Afghanistan have particularly suffered, while India, Bhutan and Bangladesh have fared better¹⁵. In Pakistan, prices of high-speed diesel, petrol and kerosene have increased up to 80%. While Bangladesh Petroleum

⁴ Chandrashekhar, C.P., and Jayati Ghosh. "Collateral Damage: Ukraine Invasion and Energy Markets – IDEAs." Accessed August 3, 2022. <https://www.networkideas.org/featured-articles/2022/03/collateral-damage/>.

⁵ "Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022." Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/>.

⁶ IMFBlog. "Restructuring Debt of Poorer Nations Requires More Efficient Coordination." IMF Blog (blog). Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://blogs.imf.org/2022/04/07/restructuring-debt-of-poorer-nations-requires-more-efficient-coordination/>.

⁷ UN GLOBAL CRISIS RESPONSE GROUP ON FOOD, ENERGY AND FINANCE "Global impact of the war in Ukraine: Billions of people face the greatest cost-of-living crisis in a generation". Accessed August 2, 2022. [GCRG 2nd-Brief Jun8 2022 FINAL.pdf](https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/gcrj2201.pdf)

⁸ Middle East Monitor. "Cost of the Ukraine War Felt in Africa, Global South," April 29, 2022.

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20220429cost-of-the-ukraine-war-felt-in-africa-global-south/>.

⁹ The Economic Times. "Sri Lanka's Inflation Surges over 60 per Cent in July." Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/sri-lankas-inflation-surges-over-60-per-cent-in-july/articleshow/93230894.cms>.

¹⁰ The Economic Times. "Sri Lanka's Inflation Surges over 60 per Cent in July." Accessed August 2, 2022.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/sri-lankas-inflation-surges-over-60-per-cent-in-july/articleshow/93230894.cms>.

¹¹ UN News. "Record Inflation and Skyrocketing Prices Leave over 6 million Sri Lankans Food Insecure," July 6, 2022. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1122042>.

¹² Yusuf, Mohammed. "Ukraine War to Compound Hunger, Poverty in Africa, Experts Say." VOA. Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://www.voanews.com/a/ukraine-war-to-compound-hunger-poverty-in-africa-experts-say/6492430.html>.

¹³ Regional Bureau of Africa, "The impact of the war in Ukraine on sustainable development in Africa". Accessed 02, 2022. <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-05/UNDP%20RBA%20-%20IMPact%20of%20the%20war%20in%20Ukraine%20on%20Africa%20-%2024%20May%202022.pdf>

¹⁴ Africa News. "Fuel Hikes in Africa Driven by Russia- Ukraine War." Africa news, June 1, 2022.

<https://www.africanews.com/2022/06/01/fuel-hikes-in-africa-driven-by-russia-ukraine-war/>.

¹⁵ India Foundation. "The War in Ukraine: Impact on South Asia," July 2, 2022. <https://indiafoundation.in/articles-and-commentaries/the-war-in-ukraine-impact-on-south-asia/>.

Corporation (BPC) is losing about Tk 90 crore per day. The economic crisis of any country raises the burden on poor women in the form of low-wage jobs, lack of access to essential health services, complete loss of income, and increased threat of violence¹⁶. The shortage of essential things has dramatically impacted the political economy of vulnerable countries in the global South while inflicting death and hunger on the poorest sections of society worldwide. There is a need to understand the discourse on war from the perspective of women's lived experiences in countries of the global south¹⁷.

The war in Ukraine has also sharpened changes in the international balance of forces and international security structures and is forcing changes in the global political economy. It is rooted in the politics of NATO expansionism and the US re-domination of the European Union¹⁸. Such aggression of Russia toward Ukraine, and other countries seen as Russia's zone of interest, is an unacceptable violation of the territorial integrity of a sovereign nation. These are disturbing geopolitical games of "centres of power", played by the US, Russia, China, etc. using "less important" countries as if they were chips in their power games, shaping and re-shaping maps and peoples' fate.

This war has displaced millions and came up as an existential crisis for Ukraine's sovereignty and a threat to the sovereignty of other countries in the region, as well as the international liberal order. Now the liberal democratic practices have been discarded worldwide, and authoritarianism has been on the offensive mode¹⁹. *The world has been increasingly struggling between two systems of governance that are opposed to each other: open society and closed society*²⁰. Russia's invasion of Ukraine could be the beginning of the third World War. Is this an emergence of another cold-war-like situation? The US and its allies have led unprecedented sanctions against Russia, but almost no countries in the global South have signed onto them. There are various reasons why several countries prefer an approach which is neither Russia nor US and NATO. The first is economics and trade, the second is due to scepticism towards the US (United States)²¹. Is this a re-emergence of the non-alignment movement? Are these emerging global trends redefining the roles of global blocks such the G20, BRICS, G7? What role does the UN have in all of this? Indonesia urged G20 finance leaders to stay focused on global economic recovery, but their meeting in Bali ended without a joint communique because the war in Ukraine continues to divide the group.

Beyond this, globally, the ugly *reality of racism*, discrimination, and sexism is disturbing. People of colour fleeing war and conflict situations around the world have not witnessed the same treatment as the white Ukrainian refugees²². The US deported the African and Caribbean refugees back to violent homelands with unstable situations where they experienced threats to their lives, abuses, and rape. But the US welcomes tens of thousands of Ukrainians with open arms. The entire scenario also reinforced xenophobia against the Russians. The *rage and hate* against the Russians have become symbolic of solidarity for the Ukrainian people²³. The discriminatory pattern is also visible in the practice of debt cancellations.

¹⁶ Floro, Maria, Annika Tornqvist, and Emcet Tas. "The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Women's Economic Empowerment." *American University, Department of Economics, Working Papers*, January 1, 2009.

¹⁷ Nasser, Yasser Ali. "Ukraine War Looks Different in the Global South." Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). Accessed August 4, 2022. <https://www.dsausa.org/democratic-left/ukraine-war-looks-different-in-the-global-south/>.

¹⁸ The Wire. "Anuradha Chenoy : Exclusive News Stories by Anuradha Chenoy on Current Affairs, Events at The Wire." Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://thewire.in/author/anuradha-chenoy>.

¹⁹ Milke, Smeltzer, and Buyon Noah. "From Democratic Decline to Authoritarian Aggression." Freedom House. Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2022/from-democratic-decline-to-authoritarian-aggression>.

²⁰ Larry, Elliotts. "Ukraine Invasion May Be Start of 'Third World War', Says George Soros." *the Guardian*, May 24, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/may/24/ukraine-invasion-may-be-start-of-third-world-war-says-george-soros>.

²¹ Guyer, Jonathan. "Why Some Countries Don't Want to Pick a Side in Russia's War in Ukraine." *Vox*, June 9, 2022. <https://www.vox.com/23156512/russia-ukraine-war-global-south-nonaligned-movement>.

²² UN News. "UNHCR Chief Condemns 'Discrimination, Violence and Racism' against Some Fleeing Ukraine," March 21, 2022. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1114282>.

²³ OpIndia. "Ukraine Invasion and the Rise of Xenophobia against Russians: From Calling out the Leader to Wokes Cancelling Average Russians," March 2, 2022. <https://www.opindia.com/2022/03/ukraine-invasion-rise-xenophobia-against-russians/>.

The Ukrainian government bodies, UK, US, and Germany, agreed to suspension repayments until 2023 on campaigners' demands in the crisis²⁴, however, in the global South other countries with extreme crises have not been considered for debt cancellation.

The war in Ukraine followed by extremely stringent sanctions against Russia has resulted in a serious global energy crisis. Disappointedly, several countries, especially several 'rich' countries, including Germany, Netherlands, UK, have turned to buying more fossil fuel and investing in new oil and gas infrastructures to meet their energy needs. This will have devastating impact on climate change.²⁵

Additionally, total global military expenditure has increased by 0.7 per cent in real terms in 2021 to reach \$2113 billion. United States, China, India, the United Kingdom, and Russia constitute 62% of the expenditure²⁶. More recently Germany prioritized military spending and committed €100 billion for defense²⁷. However, the financing gap to building social protection floors has widened by approximately 30 per cent since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis owing to the increased need for healthcare services, income security measures, and the reductions in GDP caused by the crisis. The financing gap significantly impacts the well-being and access to basic needs of women and girls across different groups²⁸.

Globally the world is being divided at various levels²⁹ Therefore, it becomes crucial to understand how war dynamics impact multiple global trends and how it is resulting in direct and collateral damages to the lives of women and girls across the world.

The two-part webinar will explore the following questions:

1. What are the impacts of the war in Ukraine war women and girls globally?
2. How do women's/feminist agendas get affected in Russia and in Ukraine and other countries in the region?
3. How has the energy, food and vaccine crisis impact women and girls globally?
4. How is war impacting global trends and political economy? There is an increase of militarism, and military budgets. There also is a rise of the populist extreme right in Europe. A rise in xenophobia, anti-gender attitudes and a questioning of EU's sanctions vs Russia. What are the impacts of these trends on women and girls?
5. Sanctions vs Russia and its implications in Europe and elsewhere in the world.
6. What is the role of global blocs such as G20, G7 and BRICS in such crisis and in highly polarised world?
7. What is the way forward and how to build solidarity among feminists globally?

Expected Outcome from Two Phases of Webinars

1. The comprehensive report/ blog from the insights of both webinars.
2. One joint feminist statement in solidarity.

For more details and to register please email bricsfeministwatch@gmail.com

²⁴ Justice, Debt. "Campaign Success: Cancel Ukraine's Debt - Debt Justice Comment:" International Debt Charity | Debt Justice (Formerly Jubilee Debt Campaign) (blog), July 21, 2022. <https://debtjustice.org.uk/news/campaign-success-cancel-ukraines-debt>.

²⁵ UN chief slams 'delusional' fossil fuels dash amid Ukraine war, 14 June, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/14/un-chief-slamsdelusional-fossil-fuels-dash-amid-ukraine-war>

²⁶ "World Military Expenditure Passes \$2 Trillion for First Time | SIPRI." Accessed August 10, 2022.

<https://www.sipri.org/media/pressrelease/2022/world-military-expenditure-passes-2-trillion-first-time>.

²⁷ Welle (www.dw.com), Deutsche. "Germany Commits €100 Billion to Defense Spending | DW | 27.02.2022." DW.COM. Accessed August 17, 2022. <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-commits-100-billion-to-defense-spending/a-60933724>.

²⁸ "World Social Protection Report 2020-22: Social Protection at the Crossroads – in Pursuit of a Better Future: Executive Summary [EN/AR/RU/ZH/TR/ID/VI] - World | ReliefWeb." Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/world-social-protection-report2020-22-social-protection-crossroads-pursuit-better>.

²⁹ Welle (www.dw.com), Deutsche. "Disagreements over War in Ukraine Thwart G20 Finance Meeting | DW | 16.07.2022." DW.COM. Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://www.dw.com/en/disagreements-over-war-in-ukraine-thwart-g20-finance-meeting/a-62497490>.

Project holders:

BFW (BRICS Feminist Watch): (BFW) is a global South feminist alliance that began from emerging economies and soon expanded across the South with few members in the global North. Formed in 2017, BFW brings the collective strength of feminist analysis and activism from the South to promote gender-responsive, inclusive, and sustainable development and to make visible the linkages between gender justice, environmental and economic justice as critical to sustain movements and actions. BFW has established itself as an important gendered voice from the South, as a network of feminist scholars, researchers, and activists whose mission is to work for economic and gender justice as well as sustainable and democratic development. It works to influence policy cross-regionally in the context of development and global governance. BFW, undertakes critical feminist analyses and advocacy to promote ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable development. BFW has been monitoring and extending advocacy and policy advice to global blocs and institutions. These are the G20, BRICS and IFIs including New Development Bank (NDB) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

WIDE + (Women in Development Europe+): WIDE+ is a European network of associations and activists that fights for women's rights as part of a larger struggle for social justice, sustainable livelihoods and human rights. We advocate changing European policies that affect people in and outside of Europe. WIDE+ promotes inclusive and intersectional feminist movement building in Europe in solidarity with feminists in the global South.

AIDOs (Italian Association for Women in Development (AIDOS): AIDOS is an Italian NGO established in 1981 to build, promote and protect the rights, dignity and freedom of choice of women and girls: a gender perspective for sustainable development. AIDOS has consultative status with ECOSOC and is implementing partner of UNFPA and UNHCR in Italy.

Focus on the Global South: Focus on the Global South is an activist think tank in Asia providing analysis and building alternatives for just social, economic and political change. We work on the following thematic areas: Political Economy of Development; Power and Democracy; and People's Alternatives.

Artists4Peace: Artist for Peace is a collective of kindred artistic souls seeks to channel our creativity, ideas and imagination for common causes that make a difference.

These online seminars are made possible by financial support from **Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Regional Office New Delhi**