CHAPTER

5

Inequalities and the assault on human dignity

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Inequalities have a direct bearing on dignity—and thereby on human security. This chapter is concerned with horizontal inequalities—those experienced between groups of people based on some shared characteristic, including aspects of how they choose to self-identify. The chapter considers inequalities in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and age, among others. It describes how discrimination, violence and violations of human rights parallel horizontal inequalities. It points to the importance of understanding intersectionality: because each person's identity is plural, some face discrimination on multiple fronts. For instance, Black women face different forms of sexism from White women and different forms of racism from Black men. Horizontal inequalities often persist despite measures to outlaw or regulate their underlying drivers (through antidiscrimination laws, for example). Even when groups are formally protected against discrimination, social, political and cultural practices of exclusion can still erode people's dignity. Many groups have little to no formal protection at all, as is the case for large numbers of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or another sexual minority (LGBTI+ people) around the world.

Securing lives of dignity for people who suffer horizontal inequalities demands systemic action. This chapter argues that this action must be bring the centrality of agency to the fore. An approach based on agency affirms that people from excluded groups are not passive victims (of forces beyond their control) or beneficiaries of support from others—important as assistance may be in many circumstances; rather, that they are active movers and participants in social change. The focus on agency makes plain that addressing horizontal inequalities is more than improving the wellbeing of groups excluded and discriminated against, important though that is. And a focus on agency shows how eliminating horizontal inequalities not only is a matter of justice for those discriminated against or excluded but also enriches communities and society more broadly, because agency is central for broader processes of social change.[1] An agency-focused approach also recognizes that people hold multiple identities at once.[2] That people are simultaneously members of different collectives provides for solidarity to be built across groups over shared values and goals. A foundation of agency enhances space for solidarity as people are better able to reason about, strategize and participate in actions that transform society.

Horizontal inequalities undermine human dignity

What does dignity mean? As discussed in chapter 1, dignity lies at the heart of human rights. A commitment to human rights is based in part on the recognition that everyone has inherent worth, solely by virtue of being human and irrespective of their gender, race or other identity. To quote again from article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."[3] The inherent dignity of all people is also the basis for the universality of human rights. There are complementary perspectives on dignity. For instance, according to Martha Nussbaum, dignity is related to respect, agency and equality. So, dignity consists of being treated with respect. It also implies having control over what people are able to do. And it implies respecting the principle that all human beings are all equal.[4]

> "Injustice, oppression and discrimination are based on hierarchies of human value, which directly affect dignity

Human rights set necessary conditions for what we owe to each other—treating each other with respect, tolerance and understanding. Realizing these conditions places broad demands on society that can be fulfilled not only by legislating and enforcing the protection of particular rights but also by examining the multiple ways that preclude advancing those rights.[5] It is in the context of such examination that horizontal inequalities can become relevant, harming the pursuit of human rights and, in part as a result, hurting dignity. Injustice, oppression and discrimination are based on hierarchies of human value, which directly affect dignity. Justice and nondiscrimination—as well as the principle of equality for everyone—are the core values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[6] and the global commitment to recognize inherent human dignity.

In addition to legal protection of human rights, expanding people's capabilities also supports dignity. However, dignity can be diminished when some groups progress and others fall behind in what counts, or is perceived to count, for social worth.[7] When new generations are more educated but lack access to high quality jobs or the ability to afford the living standards of past generations, people's dignity can be affected by a sense of unfairness or a sense of failure.[8]

> "It is important when considering human security to account for all voices and enable their agency both in the description of issues and in policy responses

The frame of human security has not always fully accounted for the different concerns of varied social groups. For instance, feminist critiques have pointed out that policies that claim to serve all people often render the specific concerns of women invisible.[9] Security discourses can also fall into gendered, racialized and colonialist patterns by associating certain groups of people with victimhood and weakness[10] and by adopting protection strategies that may ultimately disempower those being protected. Many institutions connected with enhancing security can be underpinned by patriarchal, colonial and traditional social norms. When that happens, they endow some groups with greater power while others are placed in a subordinate and submissive position. For instance, in patriarchal societies men typically are granted the role of protectors of their families and, by extension, of leaders protecting a population.[11]

It is therefore important when considering human security to account for all voices and enable their agency both in the description of issues and in policy responses. The fundamental needs of individuals for human security differ based on each person's plural identities (sex, gender, race, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, ability and residence).[12] People's plural identities are a source of strength and enrich personal and social life but can also expose some people to overlapping forms of discrimination and violations of human rights.[13] In analysing experiences of human insecurity and designing policies to tackle them, recognizing intersectionality helps overcome the dangers of masking overlapping identities[14] by acknowledging that ultimately we are all human.[15]

This chapter describes some forms of discrimination and rights violations that are manifested in, and often foster, horizontal inequalities. These inequalities bear on the human security threats discussed throughout this Report (figure 5.1). At a time of increasing severity and frequency of hazards linked to the Anthropocene context that threaten human security, the gaps in capabilities more relevant to responding to them are widening.[16] Some groups that are falling through the floors of basic capabilities are also experiencing greater challenges to dignity. The chapter highlights inequalities in control over resources[17] (land, food and water[18]) that affect health, time allocation and possibilities for education and work—widening gaps in capabilities.[19] It identifies the impacts of economic insecurity and greater risk to crises and shocks across different groups. Finally, it brings into view the ways the different experiences of insecurity and overlapping hierarchies of power can undermine human dignity.

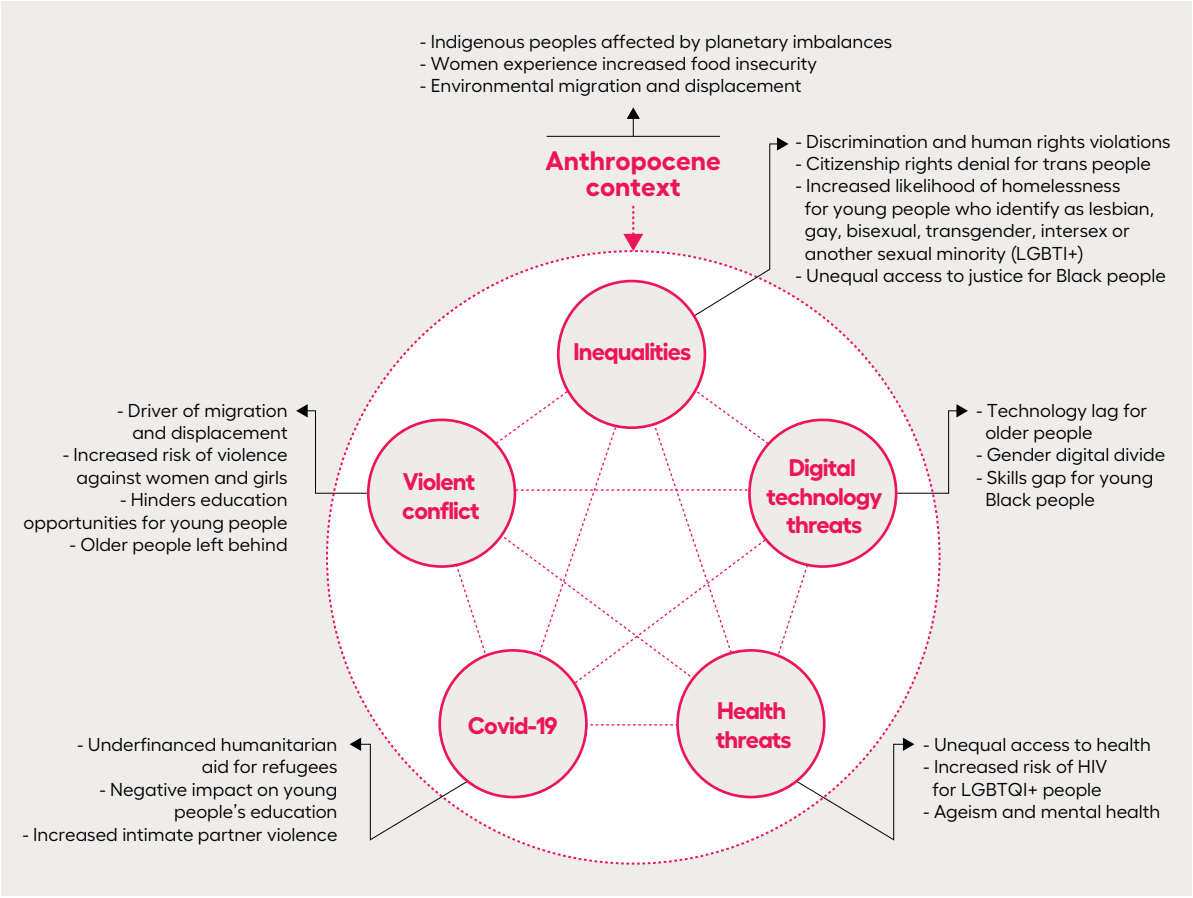
Threats to human security along the lifecycle

The functional capacity of people (echoing the notion of capability, the ability to be and do what people value and have reason to value[20]) evolves from childhood through adult life to older age. But there can be wide disparities in people's functioning due to disadvantages and risk factors throughout lifecycle (figure 5.2). This section discusses some of the challenges faced by groups at higher risk of suffering from inequalities in functional capacity: children, young people and older people.

Human security and wellbeing achievements at earlier stages of a person's life affect outcomes at later stages. For example, poverty, violence and mental health disorders earlier in life reduce healthy life expectancy, resulting in poorer health capabilities later in life.[21] For children trauma, stress and adverse childhood experiences impair both physical and mental development, with long-lasting impacts.[22] Household and family violence, conflict and community violence, insecurity, discrimination, income insecurity, child marriage and gender-based violence are just some of the human security threats affecting children's health and development.

Conflict threatens every aspect of children's lives and security. In 2019, 69 percent of the world's

Figure 5.1 Different groups of people experience new threats to human security differently



Source: Human Development Report Office.

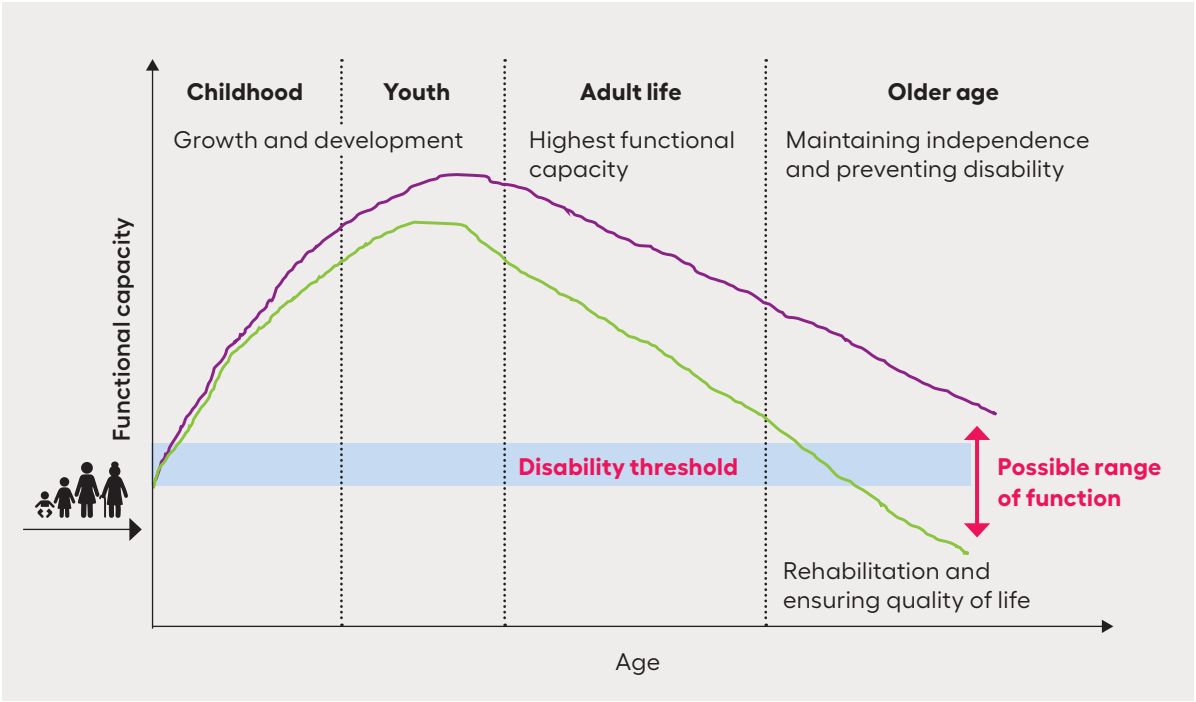
children were living in conflict-affected countries, and more than 18 percent were living in conflict zones.[23] Between 2005 and 2020 there were more than 266,000 verified grave violations against children in conflict,[24] with the real number likely much higher.[25] Children engaged in armed conflicts face various and compounding threats, including death, injury and disability, as well as deprivations in nutrition, poor living conditions, gender-based violence, obligations to take part in torture and killings, and dangerous labour.[26] Conflict also deprives children of education.[27]

Digital technologies are revolutionizing both the potential benefits and potential threats of technology for children, but the effects are unequal. Digital technologies create opportunities for access to education, breaking cycles of poverty and social needs for children and young people. But digital divides exist between low- and high-income countries, reaching 81 percentage points for children and young people (figure 5.3).

Inequalities in access to digital technologies have widened inequalities in education during the Covid-19 pandemic, as the reliance on digital technologies for education has grown.[28] This corresponds with trends showing that differences in school attendance between the pre-pandemic period (with in-person instruction) and the pandemic period (with online teacher-assisted lessons) were more pronounced in countries with higher multidimensional poverty.[29] The pandemic further exposed the gender digital divide, showing that women and girls are at a disadvantage in digital skills, with bigger gaps in more advanced skills, hindering their ability to take advantage of technology.[30]

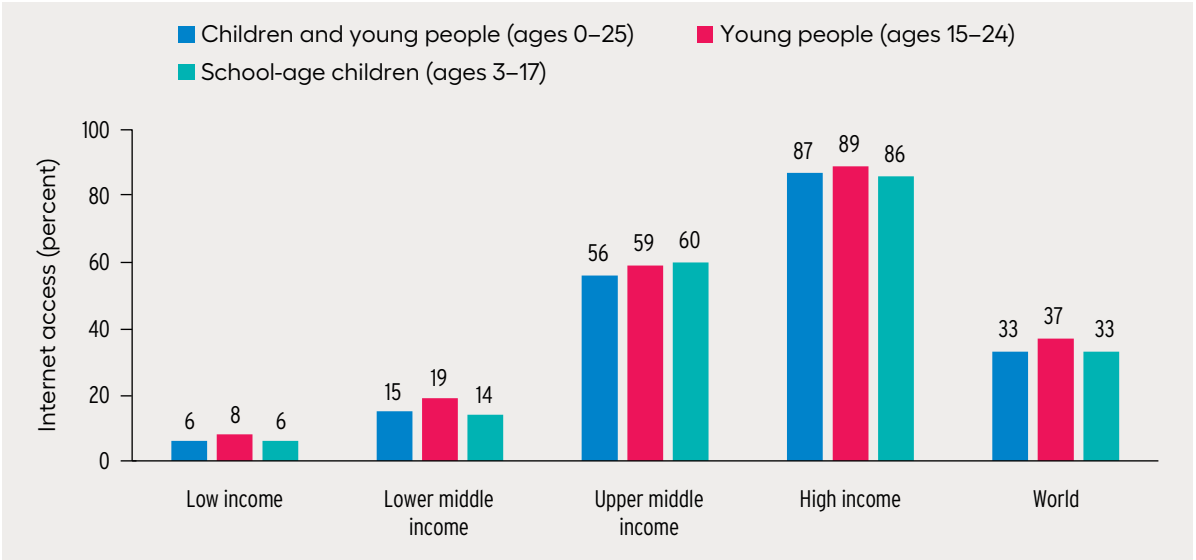
Protection and empowerment strategies will differ for every age group. Children, especially those in early childhood, depend on external inputs for survival and development of basic capabilities. This need demands action on the part of caregivers and institutions to allow children to develop free from

Figure 5.2 The change in functional capacity over the lifecycle has different implications for human security challenges and thus requires different policies



Source: Human Development Report Office, adapted from Kalache and Kickbusch (1997) and WHO (2002).

Figure 5.3 There is great inequality between high-income and low-income countries in young people's internet access at home



Source: UNICEF and ITU 2020.

human insecurity. This does not mean that children are not agents in their own lives and societies. Children and adolescents are active participants in society through cultural, social and political engagement, and in many cases they are also participants in economic activity and care work.[31] Recognizing their agency in these areas is key to protection and empowerment strategies for children.

"Children and adolescents are active participants in society; recognizing their agency in these areas is key to protection and empowerment strategies for young people

Youth marks the shift to adult life, with a higher functional capacity in the transition from school settings to workplaces. Having less experience and fewer skills than older adults, young people can encounter entry barriers to the labour market and may have high unemployment rates, pushed even higher by the Covid-19 pandemic, which harmed groups that tend to suffer from the impacts of horizontal inequalities. For instance, in the United States in May 2020, although the unemployment rate declined among White young people, the rate among non-White young people rose.[32] Sectors where young people tend to be overrepresented (retail and hospitality) have been the hardest hit, with most jobs done by young people in these sectors unable to be performed from home.[33]

Young people are particularly affected by violent conflicts and organized crime. They also have gendered vulnerabilities to violence against women and girls, sexual assault, human trafficking and forced labour. Crime, violence and drug use have increased with Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, directly linked to limited access to employment and the loss of social and community networks.[34] These factors can force young people to pull out of civic spaces, reducing their visibility.[35] Young people are often excluded or given only a token role in civic spaces,[36] where their voices are not heard to shape their own future.[37] In decisionmaking linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, younger generations have not systematically gained a seat at the table with policymakers and leaders.[38] Despite these challenges, young people have demonstrated that they are critical agents of social change, as they seek creative ways to prevent violence and consolidate peace around the globe.[39]

With longer life expectancies and lower fertility rates, the global population is ageing. By 2050 an estimated 1 in 6 people will be older than 65[40]—80 percent of them in developing countries (table 5.1).[41] Ageing gradually reduces mental and physical capacities and increases disease risks. While ageing is inevitable, the process can be widely different in speed, nature and characteristics. Genetics play a part in this variation, but much comes from a person's physical and social environment and their sex, ethnicity and socioeconomic status.[42] At the same time, inequalities within population groups carry over into older age,[43] producing wide ranges in functional capacities.[44] Having higher dependency ratios is usually associated with greater economic pressure on the active population and demands for higher fiscal spending to support the older population.[45]

Health outcomes for older people appear to be strongly linked to disadvantages at earlier stages of life that could have a cumulative effect.[46] Unhealthy habits and behaviours that lead to poor health outcomes in later life, such as smoking, high alcohol consumption, low physical activity and diets low in fruits and vegetables, have been linked to socioeconomic status.[47] In some countries where data are available, evidence shows that lower socioeconomic status is generally associated with increased smoking

Table 5.1 Number of people age 65 or older, by geographic region, 2019 and 2050

Region	Number of people age 65 or older (millions)		Percent change, 2019–2050
	2019	2050	
World	702.9	1,548.9	120
Northern Africa and Western Asia	29.4	95.8	226
Sub-Saharan Africa	31.9	101.4	218
Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand	0.5	1.5	190
Central and Southern Asia	119.0	328.1	176
Latin America and the Caribbean	56.4	144.6	156
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	260.6	572.5	120
Australia and New Zealand	4.8	8.8	84
Europe and Northern American	200.4	296.2	48

Source: UNDESA 2019.

prevalence by age, race, ethnicity and region, regardless of sex.[48] Differences in food expenditure also show the prevalence of less healthful foods in lower socioeconomic groups.[49] Communities with lower socioeconomic status face limited access to affordable exercise facilities,[50] possibly contributing to higher prevalence of obesity and diabetes in lower income populations. These risks have greater chances of becoming vulnerabilities as age advances, likely leading to health deprivations for older poor people.

"Young people have demonstrated that they are critical agents of social change, as they seek creative ways to prevent violence and consolidate peace around the globe

People facing higher deprivations live shorter lives and spend a bigger proportion of their life in poor health.[51] Healthy life expectancy is associated with better mental health. In Denmark men with mental disorders lost 10.2 more healthy life-years than men without mental disorders, and women with mental disorders lost 7.34 more life-years than women without mental disorders.[52]

People older than 65 need support because of natural declines in some functional capacities and higher risks for some diseases. In Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries their incomes are on average lower than those of the total population,[53] and their risk of falling into poverty or remaining in poverty is significant.[54] Older women are at a higher risk than men for poverty due to gender inequalities that persist from earlier in their lives. Their pensions tend to be lower because of lower wages, gaps in employment due to childbearing and childrearing labour, and longer life expectancies—and their already lower savings are stretched out over longer periods of time.[55]

As the socioeconomic analysis intersects with other capabilities such as health, physical and psychosocial dependency and support networks, an increasingly complex picture forms around the experience of ageing on wellbeing and agency. A study on multidimensional poverty and quality of ageing in Peru showed that being male, being younger, being more educated, being employed, not smoking, lacking physical disabilities, having proper nutrition, showing higher empowerment and self-esteem and being free of mental disabilities were all positively related to successful ageing for people older than 65 living in multidimensional poverty.[56]

The internalization of age stereotypes begins early in life and is present at all life stages. Stereotypes represent subconscious ideas about older people that are then embodied through attitudes towards ageing and, as discussed in chapter 1, represent a direct threat to human security. Experiences of ageism have negative effects on frailty outcomes for older people through negative age stereotypes. More positive attitudes towards and self-perception of ageing have been linked to better physical outcomes and less frailty in old age.[57] Knowledge of the ageing process reduces both anxiety about ageing and ageist attitudes themselves.[58] This points to an important first step in addressing ageism: information and education on the ageing process.

A recent example of this has been seen during the Covid-19 pandemic. Guidelines for rationing looked to maximize the lives and life-years saved, which often resulted in making older age and comorbidities the main determinants hindering access to limited care services.[59] There are also relevant inequality components to rationing, which is more likely, more severe and more often required in low-income settings, with systems that are less equipped and have fewer resources.[60]

Violence and economic discriminations harm the human security of women and girls

Gender inequality is one of the most widespread horizonal inequalities. Women's livelihoods are severely impaired by poverty, with around 435 million women and girls living on less than $1.90 a day in 2021—including 47 million pushed into poverty during the Covid-19 pandemic.[61] In low-income countries 92.1 percent of employed women are in informal employment compared with 87.5 percent of men. In lower middle-income countries 84.5 percent of women are in informal employment compared with 83.4 percent of men.[62] Women have lower earnings, lower savings, worse working conditions and less access to financial accounts, reducing their capacity to absorb economic shocks.[63] Unequal conditions leave women with less protection and resilience against unemployment, health emergencies, paid sick leave

and other basic rights. Women in many countries have low access to bank accounts, with barriers such as lack of knowledge of financial services, cultural or religious factors and lack of provisions or aversion to credit.[64] In societies where traditional patriarchal social norms are pervasive, women are more economically dependent on men and are constrained from making decisions for themselves and their families, hurting both their wellbeing and agency.

But gender inequality not only is a glaring injustice against women; it also harms society. For instance, women's food insecurity cascades into the poorer nutrition and health outcomes of entire families and communities,[65] and their economic insecurity can heavily restrict their agency. The sex gap in access to food increased from 2018 to 2019, with women living in rural settings the most affected—paradoxical since women and girls represent most food producers and food providers.[66] Still, in more than 90 countries female farmers lack equal rights to own land and to access other productive resources such as livestock,[67] impacting nutrition and health outcomes of entire families and communities.[68] Globally, the prevalence of food insecurity is higher for women than for men, with the largest gaps in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.[69]

Natural hazards kill more women than men on average and leave women at higher risk for displacement because of their dependence on forests, land, rivers and rainfall.[70] The Covid-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate toll on women in critical areas of human development. Women have had higher risk exposure to the virus by being overrepresented in the frontlines of the response. They are overrepresented in the hardest hit sectorscwomen account for 39 percent of global employment but 54 percent of total job losses during the pandemic.[71] Teenage pregnancies and violence against women and girls increased substantially during the pandemic.[72] Women's sense of not being in control and living in fear are due to traditional social norms and patriarchal structures[73] that result in the existing sex inequalities that harm their wellbeing and agency.[74]

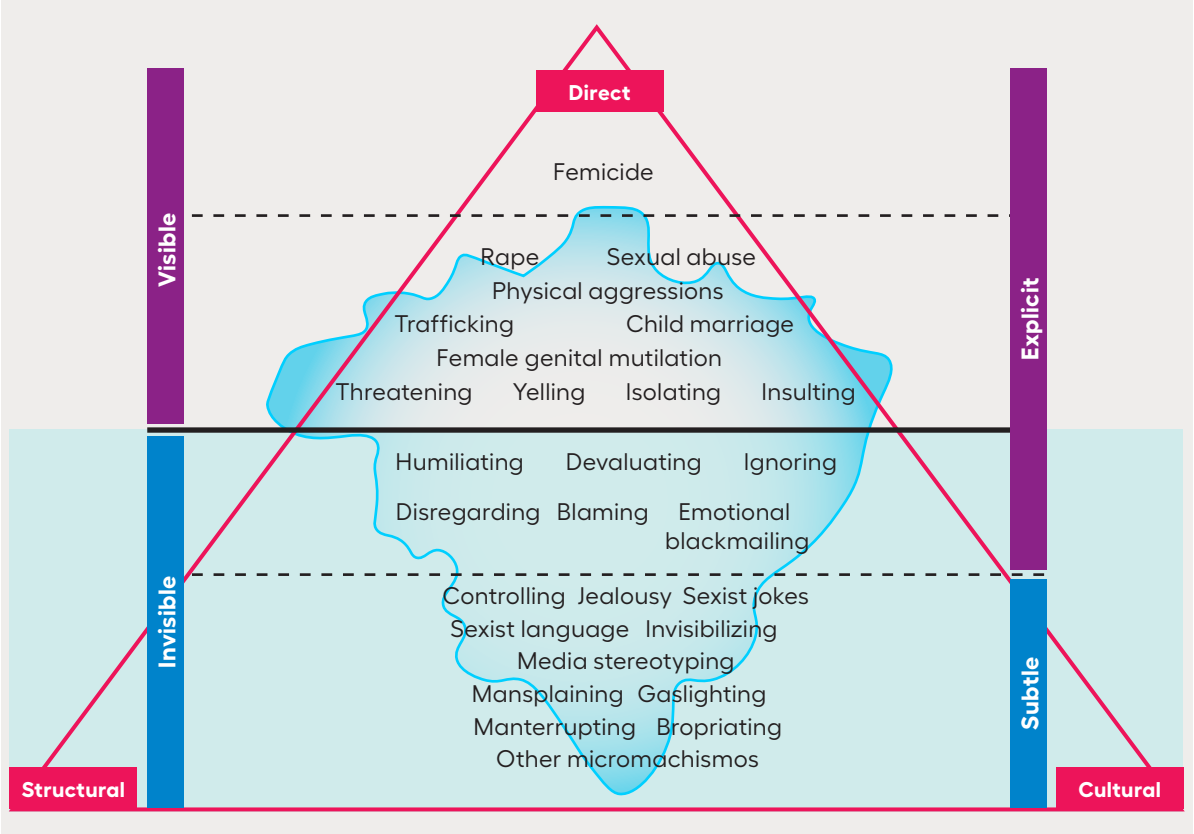
Violence against women and girls, one of the most brutal forms of harming women's wellbeing and agency,[75] encompasses any action or behaviour that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering for women and girls.[76] Violence against women and girls is the most obvious manifestation of deep power imbalances.[77] Fear of violence is a common experience for women everywhere. In the triangle of violence, direct violence refers to violence that is visible and explicit, including manifestations of physical, sexual and psychological violence (figure 5.4).[78] Indirect violence, or structural and cultural violence, is subtle and can be invisible. Structural violence is built into social systems and power relations; manifests in inequalities in opportunities, access to services and representation in decisionmaking; and is perpetuated through economic violence or child marriage, both of which limit women's opportunities. Cultural violence is a result of traditional social norms about gender and femininity, manifest in different forms of psychological and emotional violence such as stereotyping, prejudices, sexist language and micromachismos.[79] All forms of violence are interconnected.[80] Cultural violence legitimizes both direct and structural violence.[81] Subtle forms of violence, called microaggressions, build up to severe forms of violence, such as rape and femicide (box 5.1).[82]

> "As the socioeconomic analysis intersects with other capabilities such as health, physical and psychosocial dependency and support networks, an increasingly complex picture forms around the experience of ageing on wellbeing and agency

Economic violence, pervasive around the world, involves making or attempting to make a person financially dependent by maintaining total control over financial resources, preventing the person from having a financial account, withholding access to money or forbidding attendance at school or work.[83] It can deepen poverty and hinder educational attainment or work opportunities.[84] Psychological violence involves causing fear by intimidation, whereas emotional violence refers to undermining a person's sense of self-worth. Psychological and emotional violence can start with microaggressions. Targets of violence have named psychological abuse and living under fear as more harmful than direct physical violence.[85]

Intimate partner violence is widespread around the world, with 27 percent of ever-married/partnered women ages 15–49 years having experienced it. The highest prevalence is in Southern Asia (35 percent)

Figure 5.4 Different forms of violence against women and girls: Linking the iceberg model to the violence triangle



Source: Human Development Report Office based on Amnesty International and Galtung (1990).

and Sub-Saharan Africa (33 percent).[86] In some settings social and cultural norms treat violence as a justifiable response to women's perceived misbehaviour; these beliefs contribute to intimate partner violence being treated as a private matter rather than as a serious threat to women's rights and security.[87] At least 200 million girls and women alive today in 30 countries have undergone female genital mutilation.[88]

"Violence against women and girls is the most obvious manifestation of deep power imbalances

Violence is typically underreported because of three factors:[89]

- Stigma: Women who have experienced violence can be perceived as dependent, unassertive, helpless, depressed and defenceless by themselves, their families, authorities and society in general.[90]
- Denial: In different environments women and girls might not be aware that routine situations are abusive, so they consider it normal and do not name it as violence.
- Mistrust: The failure of authorities to recognize and address violent actions is one of the main risks women consider before reporting.

Inequalities in power across race and ethnicity hurt everyone's human security

Race is typically associated with physical characteristics that become socially significant (such as skin colour), while ethnicity is associated with cultural expression and identification (through language, shared traditions or beliefs). Both have been interpreted differently over time and are still viewed differently in different contexts, but this chapter emphasizes people's lived experience and how they self-identify, recognizing that this process is often extremely constrained where social categories of race and ethnicity

Box 5.1 Femicide: The killing of women and girls because of their gender

Perpetrators of violence use different forms of abuse to exercise and maintain control and domination. The killing of women is the extreme manifestation of this pattern.

The UN Vienna Declaration[1] recognizes femicide as the killing of women and girls because of their gender, which can take different forms: the murder of women because of intimate partner violence; the torture and misogynist slaying of women; killing of women and girls in the name of "honour;" targeted killing of women and girls in the context of armed conflict; dowry-related killing of women; killing women and girls because of their sexual orientation and gender identity; killing of aboriginal and indigenous women and girls because of their gender; female infanticide and gender-based sex selection foeticide; genital mutilation–related deaths; accusations of witchcraft; and other femicides connected with gangs, organized crime, drug dealers, human trafficking and the proliferation of small arms.

Femicide differs from male homicide in specific ways. For example, most cases of femicide are committed by partners or ex-partners and involve ongoing abuse, threats or intimidation, sexual violence or situations where women have less power or fewer resources than their partner. In 2020, 47,000 women and girls were intentionally killed by an intimate partner or family member, and on average a woman or girl is killed every 11 minutes by an intimate partner or a family member.[2]

Some actions by countries to address femicide are legal changes, early interventions, multiagency efforts, and special units and training in the criminal justice system. Latin American countries specifically criminalize femicide. Yet there are no signs of a decline in gender-related killing of women and girls.[3]

Notes
1. ECOSOC 2013. **2.** UNODC 2021. **3.** UNODC 2018.

are associated with specific physical or cultural features.[91] Analysing race and ethnicity dynamics offers an opportunity to use a different lens to understand what security means, uncovering assumptions, colonial legacies where relevant and, more broadly, power relations.[92] Horizontal inequalities between racial and ethnic groups often persist over time, with effects across many dimensions: political, economic, cultural and social.[93] When racial and ethnic identities become connected to political power and mobilization, more powerful groups can thwart the advancement, dignity and rights of others. In this vein the distribution of power in many contexts, upheld through colonialism and other historical processes of subjugation, has favoured the wellbeing of White people at the expense of Black and indigenous peoples.[94] When political power is distributed along ethnic lines, ethnic differences can be manipulated or leveraged by political and other leaders as points of contestation between groups, generating social tensions, mistrust and violations of rights and dignity.[95] In the most extreme cases invoking these inequalities between ethnic groups can foster violent conflict.[96]

Formal standings and official positions against racism can hide the way racial inequality has been shaped and reproduced through development.[97] It is important to recognize how longstanding conceptions of development and security have themselves upheld racial inequalities.[98] Racial identities are generated in part through a process of "othering," whereby groups define and internalize their own identities through their social relations to others. Othering is closely intertwined with existing power relations. An example is the construction of "the west" as a social category associated with progress and security, defined in relation to "other" regions that are associated with lack of progress and, concomitantly, as places of human insecurity.[99]

"Analysing race and ethnicity dynamics offers an opportunity to use a different lens to understand what security means, uncovering assumptions, colonial legacies where relevant and, more broadly, power relations

This section considers racial inequalities as experienced by Black people and indigenous peoples. Both groups are excluded from opportunities and face insecurity shaped by racist and colonial legacies, lacking rights, recognition and representation.[100] More

than 370 million indigenous peoples rely on communal land and resources,[101] but much of this land is held only through customary tenure, leaving communities vulnerable to land grabs and expropriation. About 48 percent of the Quilombolas in Brazil live in severely food-insecure households, with the North and Northeast regions of the country facing the most critical situation.[102] About 25 percent of Māori children in New Zealand live in poverty, and 29 percent live in food-insecure households.[103] Indigenous peoples have based their survival on traditional occupations, such as farming, hunting or fishing. This, combined with discrimination, has tended to limit them to wage work in the informal economy (domestic work, street vending, agriculture and construction), traditionally in low productivity industries where they do not earn enough to lift themselves out of poverty and food insecurity.[104] Informal work increases their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse, with lack of respect for their work rights and lack of social protection.

Indigenous peoples also face discrimination through the repression of cultural identities. When dominant or colonial languages were made official, indigenous languages were discouraged or made illegal,[105] and traditional religions and cultural practices were often outlawed.[106] Across America children were forcibly taken and sent to special schools to assimilate the new language and traditions, facing sexual and physical abuse or corporal punishment for using their native tongue.[107] For indigenous peoples in Canada to have full citizenship, they had to assimilate to euro-Canadian gender, sexual and familial norms.[108]

With lower representation and opportunities to participate in their communities, indigenous peoples are less likely to advocate for themselves, heightening horizontal inequalities. Indigenous peoples around the world are aware of the discrimination and lack of representation; they know their rights, and they are very active in advocating for them. But they face violence from business interests and can be dismissed by governments because of lack of representation. The number of killings of environmental activists has more than tripled since the early 2000s. In 2019 a record 212 people were killed defending their land and environment; 40 percent of them belonged to indigenous communities, and more than a third of fatal attacks between 2015 and 2019 targeted indigenous peoples.[109]

"Racial discrimination through inequitable systems that can take the form of structural racism affects education, healthcare, employment, income, benefits, social protection and criminal justice

Racial discrimination through inequitable systems that can take the form of structural racism affects education, healthcare, employment, income, benefits, social protection and criminal justice. Expressions of racism that shape Black people's experiences of insecurity include the prejudices (negative attitudes), stereotypes (categorical beliefs) and unequal treatment associated with their race. Structural racism has direct consequences for human security. For example, Black people receive lower quality health care and live in racially segregated areas or in geographic proximity to low-quality hospitals.[110] Black people face exclusion and discrimination in education and employment. For instance, they are stereotyped as less warm and less capable than their peers.[111] There is evidence that Black populations have borne a disproportionate toll during the Covid-19 pandemic.[112] In many cases Black people are more likely to be arrested and incarcerated and face more punitive sanctions in the criminal justice system.[113]

People on the move can be forced to follow paths of human insecurity

Journeys of human mobility can take many forms and be connected to different and intersecting human security threats along the way. When migrating through irregular channels, people's dignity and therefore human security are especially vulnerable to threats ranging from trafficking, abuse, violence and death in transit to lack of access to basic services and formal employment, exploitation, discrimination and restrictions of basic rights at destination points (figure 5.5). Although most people migrate voluntarily through labour or family migration,[114] many others are displaced or forced to move[115] due in part to the impacts of the Anthropocene context (see chapter 2), sociopolitical and economic instability or conflict and violence.

As dangerous planetary change continues, communities around the world—but especially in developing countries—are increasingly affected by intensifying extreme weather events and other climate

Figure 5.5 Migration and displacement on a path of insecurity

Migration and displacement

On a path of insecurity

Threats to human security triggering migration and displacement

1 Violence, conflict and instability

War, conflict, gang violence, organized crime and human rights abuses are forcing people to flee in order to preserve their life and security.

→ 6.6 million people have been forced to flee the Syrian Arab Republic since conflict broke out a decade ago.

→ More than 5 million Venezuelans have left the country amid severe sociopolitical instability.

2 Disaster

Weather-related disasters, aggravated by pressure on planetary systems, geophysical disasters and other sudden-onset and slow-onset hazards, displace millions of people every year.

→ In 2020 alone 30.7 million people were internally displaced due to disaster. Close to 40 percent of that happened in the East Asia and the Pacific region due to typhoons, floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

3 Poverty, lack of opportunities and scarcity

Dire development crises of diverse backgrounds create food insecurity, poverty, scarcity and lack of resources and opportunities for millions of people worldwide. Some turn to migration as a mitigation strategy or a solution in search for a better life.

→ Economic or labour migration dominates some of the most important migration corridors in Southern Asia, such as Bangladesh–India, Afghanistan–Pakistan, India–Pakistan and Nepal–India.

Threats to human security in transit

1 Hazardous journeys

Migrants and displaced persons attempt dangerous journeys to escape insecurity, but they can encounter more insecurity and even death along the way.

→ Deaths at some of the most dangerous migration routes:
- Mediterranean Sea: 22,977 deaths and missing migrants since 2014, 18,617 of them in the Central Mediterranean route.
- American continent: 5,822 deaths and missing migrants since 2014, 3,580 of them in the United States–Mexico border route.

2 Smuggling, trafficking and exploitation

The absence of sufficient institutional avenues for a way out of insecurity leads people to migrate in irregular situations, bypassing formal institutions. This exposes them to a range of threats to their human security.

→ Smuggling networks have become a profitable and complex industry (estimated at $6.75 billion a year only for the East, North and West Africa to Europe route and the South America to North America route). Migrants risk violence, abuse, exploitation and more in the hands of smugglers.

Compounding risk in Central America's Northern Triangle

Long-standing violence and organized crime

41 percent of migrants from the Northern Triangle cite insecurity or violence as one of the two main reasons for migration.

Searching for better opportunities

Three of the poorest countries on the continent. Fleeing poverty and the possibility of better opportunities is one of the main drivers for migration.

Disasters and climate change aggravating an already dire situation

Drought in 2018 put 3.2 million people at risk of food insecurity in El Salvador

Hurricane season 2020: Displaced 310,000 people in Guatemala and 175,000 people in Honduras and severely affected agriculture and fishing in the region.

"Coyotes y polleros"

75 percent of migrants paid smugglers to help them make part of or the entire journey to the United States, paying often between $4,000 and $8,000.

Northern Triangle migrants targeted, killed, extorted, kidnapped

Some estimates: More than 11,000 migrants kidnapped in Mexico in 2010; 2,180 Central Americans disappeared in Mexico at the end of 2015. More than 70,000 have disappeared since 2006.

(continued)

Figure 5.5 Migration and displacement on a path of insecurity (continued)

Source: Center for American Progress 2020; Community Psychology n.d.; Eurostat 2021b; Freedom for Immigrants 2021; García Bochenek 2019; Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime 2018; Human Rights Watch 2018, 2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2021; IADB 2018; IDMC 2020, 2021; International Crisis Group 2016; IOM 2016, 2019b, 2020a, 2020b, 2021; IPUMS USA 2021; Laczko, Singleton and Black 2017; Long and Bell 2021; Migration Data Portal 2021a, 2021b; Repeckaite 2020; UNHCR 2018, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c; UNHCR and UNICEF 2019; UNODC 2020; US Customs and Border Patrol 2021; US Department of Homeland Security 2019.

phenomena that threaten their lives, livelihoods and human security. For example, severe droughts and floods endanger water access and food security and force seasonal or permanent migration. It is predicted that by 2050 around half of the world population, and as much agricultural production, will be at risk due to increased drought and flood variability,[116] a potential push-factor for migration.[117] Rising sea levels are also expected to influence the migration of millions, particularly affecting Small Island Developing States and countries with large coastal settlements.[118] Individuals, families and communities may thus choose migration as a way to mitigate their environmental risk and protect their human security.

The number of people forcibly displaced due to conflict or disaster has trended up over the past decade, reaching more than 80 million worldwide (see chapter 4). More than 86 percent of refugees are hosted in developing countries, and 27 percent of all refugees are hosted in the Least Developed Countries.[119] Managing incoming people presents a complex challenge for host countries, which struggle to safeguard the dignity and human security of those on the move and to protect and empower refugees and migrants. And the Covid-19 pandemic has brought added operational and financial challenges to the disaster displacement response, further exacerbating the impacts of displacement on human security and the wellbeing of those affected.[120]

In general, international migration is intimately connected with several dimensions of human security. Nearly two-thirds of the close to 272 million international migrants worldwide in 2019 were labour migrants.[121] While seeking better opportunities, labour migrants face insecurities ranging from discrimination to barriers in access to basic services such as health, education and housing, even though they can fill skill and labour gaps and contribute to host societies and economies.

Discrimination impairs the mental and physical health of migrants.[122] Migrants are also discriminated against and subjected to violence because of misinformation and discriminatory beliefs that they hurt the economic prospects of host-country citizens by stealing jobs or draining social services.[123]

Ending discrimination against different expressions, behaviours or bodies enhances human security for all

LGBTI+[124] people face specific human security challenges, stemming from repressive (and often violent) responses to their having identities, expressions, behaviours or bodies that are perceived to transgress traditional dominant gender norms and roles.[125]

The human security discourse has not acknowledged the different gender identities and sexual orientations or incorporated LGBTI+ experiences of human insecurity.[126] In terms of freedom of want, LGBTI+ people face discrimination in home ownership, credit and financial resources, education and employment. They also face impediments in exercising the right to full citizenship and in access to basic services—as well as increased health risks and a greater likelihood of being homeless. They face particular risk of harm in societies that do not tolerate diversity.[127]

> “The human security discourse has not acknowledged the different gender identities and sexual orientations or incorporated LGBTI+ experiences of human insecurity

To be recognized as a person before the law is a human right and key to accessing education, work, housing and health services, to political participation and to protection from violence, torture and discrimination.[128] LGBTI+ people do not have the right of recognition of their identity and full citizenship in 87 percent of the world’s 193 countries.[129] In many countries trans women reported experiencing violence when they attempted to get their government-issued identity cards, passports or electoral cards.[130]

LGBTI+ people, especially young LGBTI+ people, have a greater likelihood of being homeless due to familial rejection; economic and legal issues; discrimination in home ownership, credit and financial resources; mental illness; addiction; or eviction.[131] Some 15–30 percent of young people experiencing homelessness may identify as LGBTI+.[132] In many countries LGBTI+ people have low visibility, with fewer than 15 percent disclosing their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression to their families in 2016 and around 5 percent in schools, workplaces or communities.[133] When employers discriminate or refuse to hire transgender people for not having certain documents, this pushes LGBTI+ people to less productive positions than they are qualified for—such as jobs in the informal sector.[134]

Gay cisgender men have higher risk of contracting HIV. In South Africa HIV prevalence among LGBTI+ people ranges from 10 percent in Cape Town to 50 percent in Johannesburg.[135] Lesbian and bisexual women have the lowest STD prevention rates in Thailand, where 84 percent of bisexual women and 90 percent of lesbians have never been tested for HIV.[136] The stress and trauma LGBTI+ people experience can result in poor mental and physical health outcomes. A study by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that LGBTI+ young

people are four times as likely as cisgender students to seriously consider suicide.[137]

Due to stigma LGBTI+ people may be denied access to health, education or technology services. Health care providers often do not understand their unique needs.[138] Bullying and exclusion at schools can reduce their ability to study or lead them to skip school.[139] In Thailand 41 percent of LGBTI+ people and 61 percent of transgender women reported discrimination as students in 2018.[140] Technology-wise they are overlooked by automated gender recognition of artificial intelligence, and the digital divide is higher for older LGBTI+ people.[141] LGBTI+ people are also more prone to online violence and discrimination, with 64 percent of LGBTI+ social media users experiencing harassment and hate speech.[142]

Regarding freedom from fear, anxiety and indignity, LGBTI+ people endure torture, inhumane and degrading treatment, criminalization, targeted physical and sexual attacks, forced medical interventions, conversion therapies and killings. In many countries men perceived to be gay have been targets of arbitrary detentions, including other forms of violence such as electric shocks, beatings, insults and humiliations.[143] Violence can start early in life in different spaces (home, school, work, public spaces, online), and the threat of violence and abuse lasts throughout their lives, with greater risk for sexual violence.[144] LGBTI+ people are stigmatized and pathologized through their lives, being perceived as ill, disordered, malformed or abnormal.[145] The vast majority of LGBTI+ people in several countries have been subject to violence, with higher incidence for gay men, and many have experienced sexual violence.[146] Throughout LGBTI+ people's lives discrimination reduces their access to education, employment and social protection and can lead to death (box 5.2).

> "Agency is key for the simultaneous achievement of empowerment and protection, placing the person at the heart of the security actions

One of the main challenges in assessing the coverage of human rights, discrimination and violence is the lack of global and national statistics and data on gender identity. And sexual orientation puts policymakers in uncharted territory as they craft programmes and policies that affect LGBTI+ people and their families. The lack of disaggregated data also risks grouping the different identities under the LGBTI+ umbrella, despite different needs and experiences of insecurity.

Box 5.2 Understanding transfemicide

Trans and gender-diverse people face discrimination and marginalization every day that can lead to violence and death. The murder of transgender people is sometimes reported but often in a transphobic way. In most countries there is no formal data collection to describe the nature, frequency or extent of transgender homicides. Since 1980 activists around the globe have shed light on transphobic violence. The Brazilian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organization Grupo Gay da Bahia and the US Transgender Day of Remembrance website were pioneers.

In 2009 the Trans Murder Monitoring Observatory started to systematically monitor, collect and analyse reports of the killing of trans and gender-diverse people worldwide.[1] Its latest data show an alarming increase from 149 in 2008 to 375 in 2021—or 151 percent. About 70 percent of the recorded murders happened in Central and South America. About 96 percent of the recorded murders were trans women or transfeminine people, for whom the risk for sexual violence increased because 58 percent of murdered trans women and transfeminine people were sex workers.[2] Other identities intersect as well: in the United States 89 percent of the trans people murdered were Black, and in Europe 43 percent of the trans people murdered were migrants.[3]

Notes

1. Balzer, LaGata and Berredo 2016; Trans Murder Monitoring Observatory 2020. **2.** Trans Murder Monitoring Observatory 2021. **3.** These figures are incomplete because data are not systematically collected in most countries and because families, authorities and media often misgender trans people. It is not possible to estimate the number of unreported cases. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted marginalized trans people (those who are Black, sex workers, migrants, young and poor), deepening inequalities. It has complicated sex work, on top of the stigma and criminalization that leaves trans sex workers exposed to violence. And it has revealed the lack of legislation and protection of trans and gender-diverse people (Trans Murder Monitoring Observatory 2020, 2021).

Eliminating horizontal inequalities to advance human security: The salience of agency and the imperative of solidarity

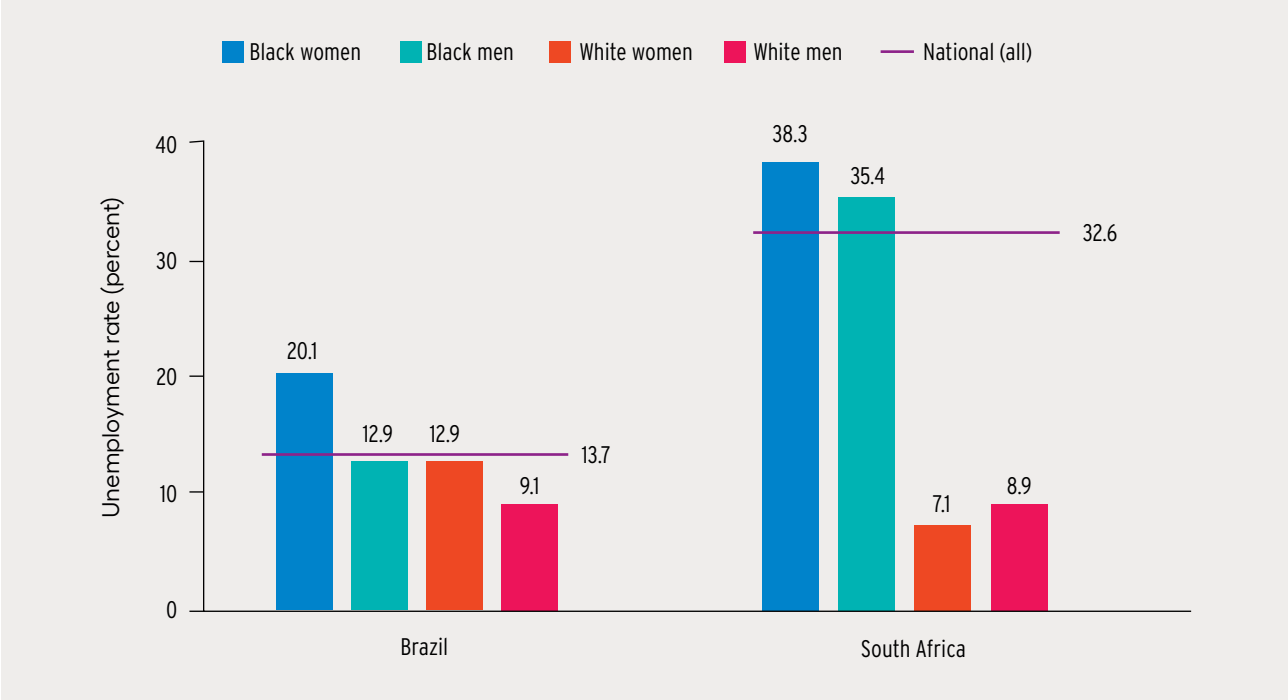
The previous sections describe how some groups of people experience violations of their human rights through exclusion, discrimination and violence. Protection and empowerment strategies are directly relevant to enhancing the human security of these groups. Agency is key for the simultaneous achievement of empowerment and protection, placing the person at the heart of the security actions (as discussed in chapter 1).

When discriminated groups are able to shape decisionmaking, potential tensions between protection and empowerment strategies diminish. Putting agency at the centre of human security actions affirms that people are not just victims lacking power over their circumstances.[147] Nor are they exclusively passive recipients of protection. Instead, they can be active participants in efforts to improve their own wellbeing and agency. Reaffirming people's status as agents rather than as victims is particularly important to eliminate horizontal inequalities, given that human security actions may otherwise unfold in disempowering, paternalistic or even hegemonic approaches.[148]

Moreover, the significance of agency is broader than enabling discriminated groups to enhance their own human security. Agency empowers people to drive social transformations that improve lives and the wellbeing of others. When embedded in protection and empowerment strategies, agency enhances people's ability to deliberate and act on broader social imperatives. Enhancing agency thus not only reduces horizontal inequalities between groups but also improves human security for everyone.

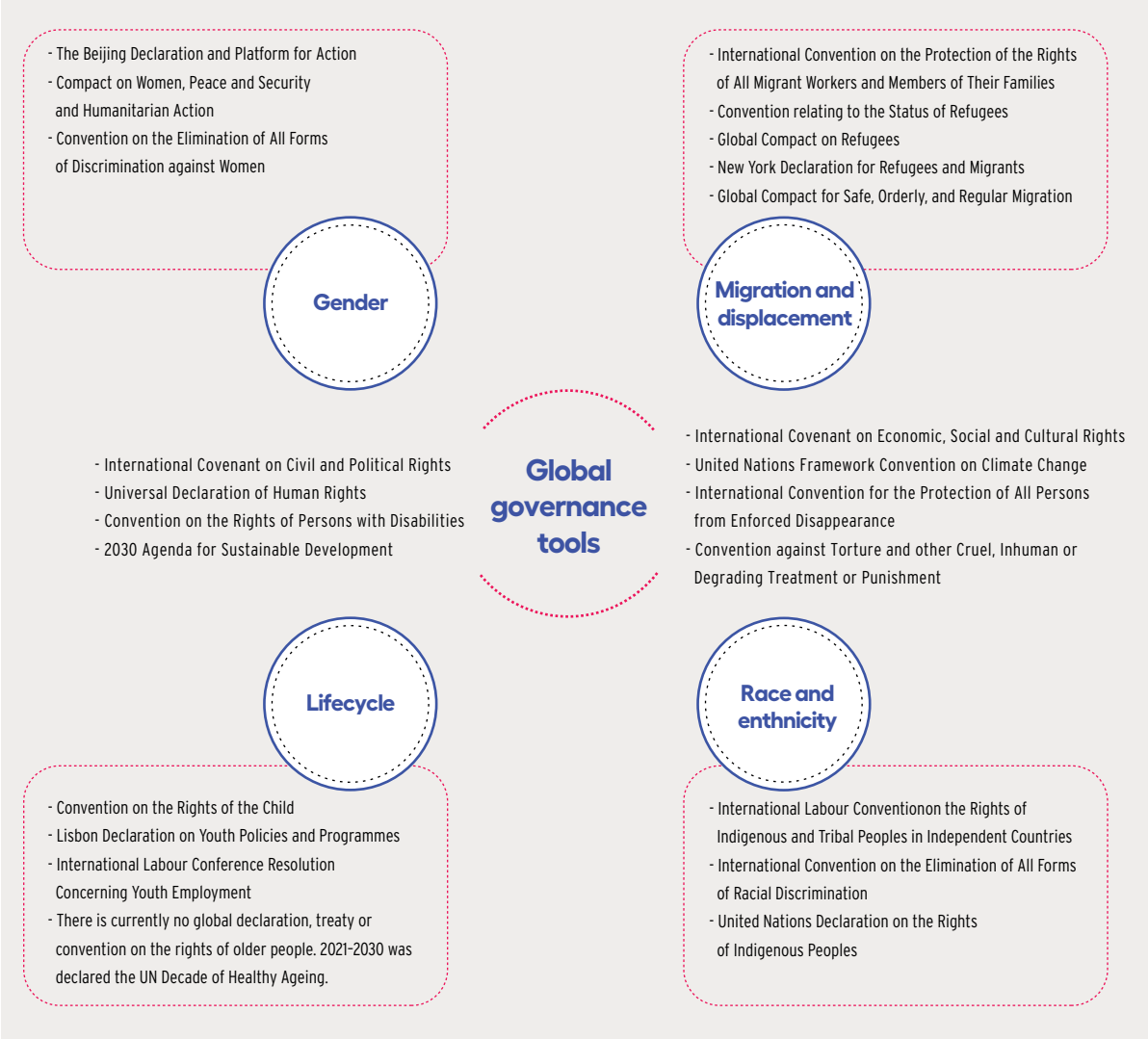
Agency can be the basis for solidarity. When agency is emphasized, there is also more space for actions that integrate diverse experiences according to plural, and sometimes overlapping, identities.[149] A focus on agency helps incorporate intersectionality in human security. It recognizes the different identities, their intersections and their practical and strategic needs[150] and allows policymakers to tackle integration, respect and meaningful inclusion. Take Brazil and South Africa, two countries where Black women have higher unemployment rates than White men and the national average (figure 5.6). Analysing and measuring human security with an intersectional

Figure 5.6 Black women have higher unemployment rates in Brazil and South Africa, first quarter of 2021



Source: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografía e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) and Republic of South Africa Department of Statistics.

Figure 5.7 Building blocks to advance human security by reducing horizontal inequalities



Source: Human Development Report Office based on UN Treaty Bodies and leading documents.

perspective can open new possibilities for solidarity across groups.

Addressing inequalities under a human security lens requires systemic action, not isolated policies, embodying a commitment to the broad realization of human rights. In the context of longstanding horizontal inequalities, this entails going beyond legislating against discrimination. Antidiscrimination measures are undoubtedly important because they mitigate unjustified differences in how certain groups are treated. However, people can continue to face exclusion and indignity even when they are formally protected from discrimination. Societal prejudices, economic insecurity and impediments to political participation, education and health can all work to perpetuate inequalities. In this context achieving broad realization of human rights demands action going well beyond legal protection.

> “Analysing and measuring human security with an intersectional perspective can open new possibilities for solidarity across groups

Advancing human security depends on eliminating horizontal inequalities; as they are reduced, human security is enhanced. For this cycle to unfold, it is crucial to emphasize the salience of agency and solidarity. Solidarity strategies have an instrumental role in the form of common security: the security of one group contributes to the security of other groups,

as the violation of some groups' rights today leaves the space for the violation of other groups' rights tomorrow.[151]

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains one of the most important commitments to protecting the dignity of all people. Numerous documents addressing specific issues or groups have since been introduced, seeking to establish shared principles and, at times, coordinated policy directions in light of global challenges affecting people's lives and dignity. They represent key resources to advance human security (figure 5.7). They can serve as building blocks, as well as guides and sources for complementary action, which must also evolve to respond to the evolving human security threats of our times.

"No person is defined solely by being part of any social group, and each person has plural identities. But there are systematic differences across groups of people that harm human security—not only of those discriminated against but of everyone

Possible evolution would include, for instance, reforming justice systems and strengthening the health care response on violence against women and girls. This would provide formal protection mechanisms for women and girls. However, protection policies are not enough for long-term human security, since they can ignore underlying causes, such as a culture that normalizes violence against women and stigmatizes women who have experienced violence. They also may limit the recognition of agency. Therefore, protection should be complemented by effective instruments to raise awareness and support for laws against violence against women and girls, to promote women's rights and to educate society at large for an end to the discrimination and revictimization of women.

For LGBTI+ people there has been a progressive reduction of criminalization of different forms of gender identity and expression and of consensual same-sex sexual conduct around the world. For example, the number of countries criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct dropped from 85 to 67 between 2007 and 2020.[152] These measures are a step towards human security. But they do not address threats to dignity if LGBTI+ people continue to face discrimination in social life. Thus, these measures should be complemented by nondiscrimination frameworks—based on legal and social norms—so that LGBTI+ people have the agency not only to lead the life they value but also to drive broader social change that eliminates the horizontal inequalities that are a permanent threat to human security.

* * *

This chapter highlights only some of the many horizontal inequalities that characterize our world today. No person is defined solely by being part of any social group, and each person has plural identities. But there are systematic differences across groups of people that, as the chapter illustrates for a few cases, harm human security—not only of those discriminated against but of everyone. It is right to emphasize the importance of addressing this discrimination by enhancing the wellbeing of those who suffer the consequences of persisting horizontal inequalities—it is a matter of justice. But it is equally crucial to recognize that people have agency, and in enhancing agency not only would there be more of a chance for the wellbeing of those excluded or discriminated against to be enhanced, but everyone's human security would advance. Eliminating horizontal inequalities thus acquires even greater relevance and reaffirms the importance of adding solidarity to protection and empowerment strategies.

SPOTLIGHT 5.1

A feminist perspective on the concept of human security

The concept of human security, as introduced in the 1994 Human Development Report,[1] was conceptualized as universal and centred on people. Universalism is a concern for people everywhere, as it encompasses the common threats experienced by human beings (unemployment, crime, pollution) while recognizing the different threats facing women in the personal security area related to violence against women. Centred on people—a concern for how people live and exercise, their choices and how they access most markets and opportunities. In this sense it recognizes the important differences in access to markets and opportunities—in relation to economic insecurity—for women and girls throughout their lifecycle.

Before the concept of human security was coined, feminist scholars had challenged the state-centric definitions of security.[2] Theories of feminist security questioned the foundations of the concept that reveals an inherent gender bias and androcentric framework,[3] defying the traditionally gendered hierarchies embedded in the concept of security that devalue women's lives and their economic and social contributions to society.[4]

The gender perspective in human security has been debated by different generations of international relations feminists,[5] often centring on two aspects that have been omitted: gender inequalities and the ways different women experience insecurity.

International relations feminists[6] started questioning the gender biases in the core concepts of state, power and security, built in masculine terms. They believed that security could be achieved by eliminating gender inequality and distinguishing between men as the powerful and women as the weak.[7] Research started with the analysis of masculine discourse around national security in the military. Cynthia Enloe analysed the construction of masculinity in national armies, the treatment of women soldiers and the presence of women prostitutes around military bases.[8] By identifying the strong connections between the exercise of power over women and their bodies and the understanding of security, she concluded that women were strongly marginalized in the name of practicing security.

The concept of security placed the state as a primary actor, built on the privilege of masculine traits, with women absent from the public sphere. Catharine McKinnon called attention to the lack of gender considerations and determinants of the state, acknowledging that the concept of state was male, as "the law sees and treats women the way men see and treat women."[9] The state and justice system exercised male power over women by institutionalizing the male point of view in law. So, security from feminist standpoints highlights the multiple and overlapping hierarchical relationships of power that undermine women's dignity and capabilities.[10]

Feminist scholars proposed a more comprehensive definition of security "not just as the absence of threats or violence, but as the enjoyment of economic and social justice,"[11] recognizing that security depends on the different economic, political, social and personal circumstances.[12]

Researchers also explored the relationship between security and gendered bodies,[13] which contributed to a better understanding of how the concept was excluding and ignoring women's experiences with insecurity, arguing that the body could explain several aspects of historical oppression on women, where sexuality is the effect of historical power relations.[14] And beyond gender, other inherent characteristics such as race or ethnicity should be considered and accounted for when conceptualizing human security—as humans with different overlapping characteristics will experience insecurity in different ways.[15]

Later, the field of international relations opened space for gender as an analytical category to make women's experiences with insecurity visible.[16] The way to rectify the exclusion of women was by analysing their everyday lives. Adding women was not their main request, as this would just reinforce the male experience and viewpoint as the main category. Gender should be considered a systematically analytical category about constructions of masculinity that

privilege men and devalue femininity.[17] Gender hierarchies shaping behaviour and practices in society should be visible, so that different solutions and alternatives can be developed to overcome insecurities.[18]

Feminist theorists had also highlighted that the lack of reflection around women's subordination in different spaces (state, family, workplace) is seen as an accidental failure of democracy instead of acknowledging gender as an element of how patriarchal institutions were built. For human security this means reflecting on whose security is being emphasized and how. Boys' and men's security is prioritized over girls' and women's because of sexism. All forms of insecurity are gendered. And their manifestations, patterns and degree of intensity might differ for each gender but also depend on the context.[19]

According to Beth Woroniuk, the key gendered dimensions missing in human security discussions since the concept emerged were violence against women, gender inequality in control over resources, gender inequality in power and decisionmaking, women's human rights and women as actors not victims.[20] Also at the beginning of the millennium, the Women's International Network for Gender and Security started to redefine security, prioritizing the consistency of human security with the principles of nonviolence, universal human dignity and sustainable living. The network defined four critical feminist dimensions for human security: a healthy planet and sustainable living environment, meeting basic human needs for wellbeing, respecting and fulfilling human rights and eliminating violence and armed conflict in preference for nonviolent change and conflict resolution. Other researchers have asked for human security to focus on women issues of physical, structural and ecological violence rather than military security.[21] To include gendered dimensions in human security means letting go of androcentric biases, bringing to the fore the experiences of women and girls shaped by unequal power relationships.

Another aspect, in line with the second-wave feminism claiming that "the personal is political,"[22] is to start with the individual or community rather than the state or the international system. Feminist scholars drew on local experiences of women to interpret and explain their insecurities and disadvantaged positions.

Feminist scholars[23] have also argued that women cannot simply be added as a category to study international relations and human security, because both are set on masculine constructions of world politics, resting on a patriarchal system. The main task of the most recent generation of international relations feminists has been to deconstruct the traditional understanding of human security by introducing new ways to interpret gender. Continuing the work by previous generations, third-generation feminists view human security through the lens of human relationships and human needs as opposed to a masculine view centred on institutions.[24]

Black feminism[25]—led by Kimberlé Crenshaw,[26] who developed the theory of intersectionality, and Patricia Hill Collins,[27] who developed the matrix of domination—proposed a critical approach to human security. The insecurities experienced by women are shaped not just by their gender but also by other identities, such as race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, disability, physical appearance and religion. These categories are used as frameworks of domination and power that exclude and marginalize those who are different.[28] For Hill Collins gender has the same importance as race and class in paying attention to the power relations that are root causes of sexism, racism and classism to understand how insecurity is experienced in people's daily lives.[29]

Several scholars have identified violence against women as one of the most pervasive threats to women's and girls' security. Worldwide, women live in constant risk of experiencing violence at the personal, community, economic and political levels, a violence rooted in the foundations of a system that facilitates patriarchal structural violence.[30] This risk limits women's and girls' mobility and agency over their own lives.

In the same line of structural violence, gender justice is one of the key aspects of improving human security, as women and girls are typically invisible and marginalized within judicial processes. Gender justice refers to "legal processes that are equitable, not privileged by and for men, and which distinguish gender-specific injustices that women experience."[31] When a group of people with a common identity face discrimination coming from institutions or traditions, it is embedded in the social structure. This structural violence can lead to suffering and death just as often

as direct violence, and though the damage is slower and more subtle, it is more difficult to repair.[32]

Feminist studies of human security have put on the table relevant themes for women such as the impacts of armed conflict on women, gender relations and gender roles; ways international humanitarian actions and peacekeeping operations widen or diminish unequal gender relations; and women's absence from decisionmaking positions that are central to peacebuilding.[33] Women experience gendered effects in the context of conflicts and are also neglected in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration because they are not recognized as combatants or are viewed simplistically as camp followers or wives of commanders because of stigma and prejudices about their gender.[34]

The frame of human security stresses the importance of people being able to take care of themselves: all people should have the opportunity to meet their most essential needs and to earn their own living. Empowerment and independence will not be achieved by framing women and girls as vulnerable victims of the different threats they face but by asking women and girls how they are secured or unsecured. Hearing women's voices will tell a different story of security, where they enforce the respect of their economic, political and human rights and are empowered to achieve their own development.

NOTES

1. UNDP 1994.
2. Donoso 2016; Gentry, Shepherd and Sjoberg 2018.
3. Blanchard 2003.
4. Tickner 1999b. See also Ling (2000).
5. The generations of international relations feminists do not match the waves of feminism (Tickner 1992).
6. Enloe 1989, 1993; Grant 1991; Peterson 1992; Runyan and Peterson 1991; Steans 1998; Sylvester 1994; Tickner 1992, 1995.
7. Tickner 1995.
8. Enloe 1989, 1993.
9. MacKinnon 1989, p. 162.
10. Gentry, Shepherd and Sjoberg 2018; Harding 2016; Tickner 2015.
11. Steans 1998, p. 67.
12. Nuruzzaman 2006.
13. Steans 1998; Sylvester 1994; Tickner 1992.
14. Based on the work of Michel Foucault (1980), several feminist thinkers used his theory of power in relation to the body (Steans 1998).
15. Gentry, Shepherd and Sjoberg 2018.
16. Chin 1998; Hooper 2001; Peterson 2003; Prügl 1999; Tickner 2005.
17. Peterson 2004.
18. Wisotzki 2003.
19. McKay 2004.
20. Woroniuk 1999.
21. McKay 2004; Tickner 1999a.
22. Hanisch 1969.
23. Baines 2005; Peterson 2004; Reardon 2001, 2015; Shepherd 2008, 2010; Tickner 2005, 2015.
24. Reardon 2015.
25. Anzaldúa 1987; Lorde 1980.
26. Crenshaw 1989, 1991, 2017.
27. Collins 1990.
28. Donoso 2016; Gentry, Shepherd and Sjoberg 2018.
29. Collins 2002.
30. Bunch 2003; Bunch and Carrillo 1998.
31. McKay 2004, p. 157. See also McKay (2000).
32. Winter and Leighton 2001.
33. Baines 2005; McKay 2004.
34. Gentry, Shepherd and Sjoberg 2018; McKay and Mazurana 2004.

SPOTLIGHT 5.2

Children and human security

United Nations Children's Fund

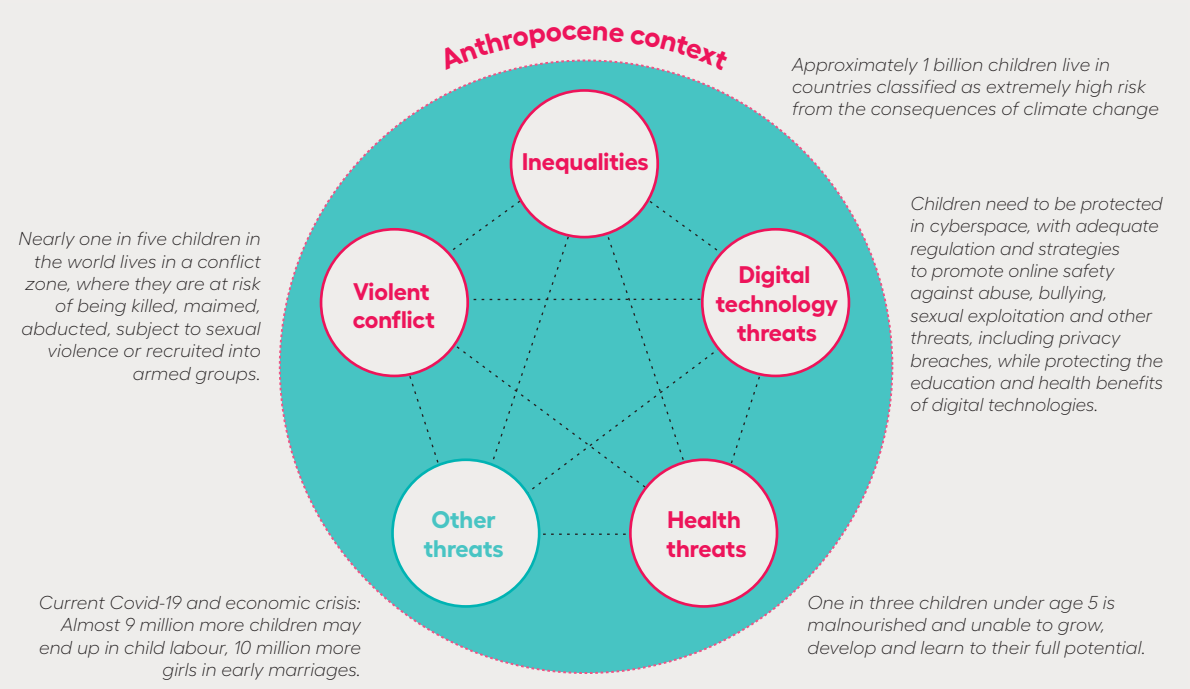
The new generation of human security threats in the Anthropocene context, including the compounding effects of inequalities, digital technology threats, health threats and violent conflict have a unique and far-reaching bearing on children and their futures. The realization of human security inevitably depends on addressing those widespread and cross-cutting challenges to their survival, livelihood and dignity, with profound effects on future generations.

This is exemplified by the Covid-19 pandemic, whose lingering impact has resulted in increasing poverty and inequality, which threaten to undermine the rights of children. An estimated 100 million more children are projected to be living in multidimensional poverty today, representing an increase of 10 percent since 2019.[1] Along with growing poverty, more children are out of school, hungry, abused, made to work and forced into early marriage. The global crisis has taken a harsh toll on children and adolescents, fuelled by deprivation and loss and heightened by racism, discrimination and gender inequality.

Anthropocene risks

The Children's Climate Risk Index[2] revealed that virtually every child on the planet is exposed to at least one environmental threat, be it heatwaves, cyclones, flooding, drought, air pollution or lead poisoning, and approximately 1 billion children live in countries classified as extremely high risk from the consequences of climate change. Children can be particularly vulnerable to climate and environmental shocks if there are inadequate essential services, such as water, sanitation, healthcare and education. As it stands, environmental degradation has contributed to one in three children having elevated levels of lead in their

Figure S5.2.1 A new generation of human security threats for children



Source: Human Development Report Office based on UN Treaty Bodies and leading documents.

blood. About half a billion children are threatened by flooding, and by 2040 one in four children will live amid extreme water stress.

In order to reduce these Anthropocene risks, efforts are needed to improve the resilience of the essential services that children depend on to survive and thrive. This includes improving access to water, sanitation and hygiene services, as well as introducing climate-smart health services. Children will also benefit from schools and education systems that can respond flexibly and adeptly to disasters and from social safety nets that are climate-responsive. In all these efforts children and young people must be engaged as agents of change in environmental and climate action, as it is their futures that hang in the balance.

Inequalities

Evidence from previous crises (including economic shocks and especially the current Covid-19 pandemic) shows that the wide-ranging social and economic impact is likely to be disproportionally higher on children, with groups most likely to be left behind suffering the severest consequences in terms of poverty and hunger linked to reduced family incomes, job losses and rising inequality.[3] The global reach of the pandemic means that children in both developed and developing countries are affected. Poorer and marginalized children globally are also more vulnerable to loss of education and less able to participate in distance learning and access health-care services. This is particularly true for the 1 in 10 children with disabilities worldwide, who may experience deprivation and be less likely to be counted, consulted and considered in decisionmaking that affects them.[4]

The cost of inaction is high. Children stand to lose the equivalent of $17 trillion, or roughly 14 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP), from their future earnings due to loss of schooling and learning.[5] Almost 9 million more children may end up in child labour, 10 million more girls in early marriages, and many more children will experience violence and suffer negative impacts on their mental health. This is not only a loss to children but also to communities, countries and the world, with productivity and growth prospects likely to be reduced for decades.[6]

Digital technology risks

Digital innovation and technology development are accelerating, particularly as the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a shift to distance and remote delivery systems. Digital innovations and solutions have become fundamental to improving children's lives across the spectrum, from health to nutrition, education, protection, access to water, sanitation and hygiene, and inclusion. Children themselves can use technologies, including the internet, for communication, play, schoolwork, accessing information, training, skilling and preparation for the world of work as well as personal expression.

Widespread school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic have spurred a reimagination in education, including through new digital delivery platforms designed to provide children with the education and skills they need for the 21st century. The persistence of the digital divide, however, means that low- and no-tech solutions that are better suited to reaching students without internet access must remain viable alternatives. Finally, with opportunities come risks and threats. Children need to be protected in cyberspace, with adequate regulation and strategies to promote online safety against abuse, bullying, sexual exploitation and other threats, including privacy breaches, while protecting the education and health benefits of digital technologies.

Health and nutrition challenges

While tremendous progress has been achieved in maternal and child health and nutrition over the past two decades, inequalities in access to health care mean that many groups of children are left behind. Young children, and newborns in particular, continue to die from preventable causes stemming from inadequate maternal and newborn health care and nutrition or from treatable infectious diseases. Moreover, failing to invest adequately in early childhood development serves to deny young children the stimulation their developing brains need to thrive. Progress in immunization for preventable diseases has also stagnated, and there is great inequality in the availability and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines.

Due to inadequate diets, only half of children ages 6–23 months receive the recommended number of meals per day that they need to thrive and grow well. This contributes to there being one in three children under age 5 who are malnourished and unable to grow well, develop and learn to their full potential.[7] To survive and thrive, every child, including adolescents, should have access to nutritious diets to avoid the double burden of obesity and undernutrition, as well as quality primary healthcare to promote both their physical and mental health. Yet globally, more than one in seven adolescents ages 10–19 is estimated to live with a diagnosed mental disorder.[8] Urgent investment in mental health services is needed, as is an end to the stigma associated with mental illness, to promote greater understanding and support of mental health.

Violent conflict

Nearly one in five children in the world lives in a conflict zone, where they are at risk of being killed, maimed, abducted, subject to sexual violence or recruited into armed groups.[9] Armed actors conduct deliberate campaigns of violence against children, including putting their schools, hospitals, water facilities and other essential services under attack. In 2020 alone the United Nations verified nearly 24,000 grave violations against children in conflict —or about 72 violations per day.[10] Women and girls face increased risk of gender-based violence during humanitarian crises. Added to this are an estimated 33 million children who were forcefully displaced in 2020, accounting for 1 in 70 children globally.[11] To help children process and heal from conflict they have experienced, mental and psychosocial support for children and adolescents must be integral to any humanitarian response.

Children deserve to grow up in an environment that is conducive to peace and security. To promote sustainable peace within societies, factors driving conflict and grievances must be addressed through the equitable and inclusive delivery and management of essential services, including education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, social protection and child protection. Institutions must also be responsive and accountable to communities and allow for inclusive participation in decisionmaking at all levels, including hearing the voices of children and young people.

None of these threats can be successfully addressed without the active involvement of children. Guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as other UN human rights instruments, all children deserve to be included, without discrimination, in matters that affect their human security and to have opportunities and agency in accordance with their rights. For this to be a reality, children and young people must be heard on decisions that affect their lives and, within an environment of trust, support and capacity development, be engaged as allies and problem-solvers on the issues that concern them the most. This will be the most effective way to prepare children for being active citizens and veritable agents of change and human development.

NOTES

1. UNICEF 2021e.
2. https://www.unicef.org/reports/climate-crisis-child-rights-crisis, accessed 20 December 2021.
3. Furceri, Ostry and Loungani 2020.
4. UNICEF 2021g.
5. World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF 2021.
6. World Bank 2020a.
7. UNICEF 2019.
8. UNICEF 2021f.
9. UNICEF 2021h.
10. UNICEF 2021i.
11. UNICEF 2021d.