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PGA Background Briefing Paper on the Impact of Nuclear and Radiological Weapons and Materials on Women

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Banjul, The Gambia July 31, 2023





Impacts on physical health

- ❑ Women face a significantly higher risk of developing cancer from ionizing radiation compared to men due to factors such as higher-risk body tissues and metabolic differences.
- ❑ The immediate effects of a nuclear explosion, including blast, heat, and intense light, affect individuals of all genders and ages indiscriminately.
- ❑ Women's reproductive health is particularly susceptible to the effects of radiation, with examples of stillbirths, deformities, and higher rates of thyroid cancer
- ❑ High doses of ionizing radiation pose risks to pregnant women, including harm to the fetus such as malformations, spontaneous abortions, and stillbirths.



Psychological impacts

- ❑ Invisible contamination from nuclear incidents can have profound psychological effects, leading to increased stress and mental health problems.
- ❑ Evidence suggests that the psychological impacts of nuclear incidents may be more severe for women, particularly mothers, due to their concerns for their children's health and the social stigma associated with radiation.
- ❑ Women affected by nuclear weapons tests in the Marshall Islands have reported enduring feelings of shame and stigma, as they fear the long-term impacts of radiation on future generations.





Evacuation and Displacement and Access to Health Care

- ❑ Nuclear materials can result in potential contamination, leading to population displacement and increased vulnerability, particularly for women and girls who face higher risks of domestic violence, rape, forced prostitution, and other crimes during conflicts.
- ❑ Women often face challenges in accessing protection, assistance, and their rights to health, housing, and property, exacerbating existing discrimination and negatively impacting their psychological and physical well-being.
- ❑ Damage or inaccessibility of hospital and healthcare infrastructure due to weapons of mass destruction can further threaten women's health, including complications during pregnancy and childbirth, which already contribute to a significant number of deaths among women of reproductive age.





Social stigma and discrimination

- ❑ Stigmatization of women includes difficulties in finding marriage partners due to fears of giving birth to malformed babies.
- ❑ Women who survive landmine incidents also face similar stigmatization and marginalization from their husbands due to their injuries, as seen in studies. The impact of injuries or disfigurements resulting from nuclear weapons is widely recognized as comparable.





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