PMAC PRINCE MAHIDOL AWARD CONFERENCE 2021

# WS402

## THE LANCET-SIGHT COMMISSION ON PEACEFUL SOCIETIES THROUGH HEALTH AND GENDER EQUALITY - HEALTH AND GENDER AT THE INTERSECTION OF ARMED CONFLICT AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

## | BACKGROUND

The Lancet-SIGHT Commission on Peaceful Societies through Health and Gender Equality is dedicated to generating new evidence and practical recommendations on how improved health and gender equality can help contribute to more peaceful societies.

Armed conflict is one of the global community's most pressing challenges, causing significant destruction and major barriers to peace and prosperity. Annual deaths from armed conflict remain at one of the highest levels in the past two decades.[1] Civil wars involving international actors are increasingly prevalent, which is a worrisome trend as these conflicts tend to be more severe, protracted, and difficult to resolve.[2] The consequences of conflict are felt worldwide, not least due to massive forced displacement. According to UNHCR, the UN's Refugee Agency, there were 79.5 million other forcibly displaced people in 2019, largely due to armed conflict. The number of displaced people today is nearly double the 2010 number of 41 million.[3]

On 23 March 2020, the UN Secretary General called for a global ceasefire to facilitate humanitarian action in conflict affected settings, including pandemic response activities. The UN Secretary General expressed deep concern that COVID-19 will make the protection of civilians during armed conflict more challenging than ever, warning that the pandemic is amplifying and exploiting fragilities across the world, including gender inequality.

However, COVID-19 continues to present a number of challenges to peacebuilding, and the dynamics of armed conflict also presents a number of barriers for effect pandemic response.[4] Experts suggest that the responses to COVID-19 in conflict-affected settings must incorporate and address gender inequalities, conflict dynamics, and the larger socio-political context. However, the relationship between gender, health, and conflict, including during the pandemic, are not well understood.

[1] Uppsala Conflict Data Program. 2020. UCPD Conflict Encyclopedia (UCPD database). Department of Peace and Conflict, Uppsala University. https://ucdp.uu.se/exploratory Accessed 10/6/2020

[2] Balch-Lindsay D, Enterline AJ, Joyce KA. Third-party intervention and the civil war process. Journal of Peace Research 2008; 45(3): 345–363. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343308088815

[3] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018. 2019; UNHCR, Geneva. https://www.unhcr.org/5ee200e37.pdf

[4] Lancet-SIGHT Commission and WHO EMRO. COVID-19 pandemic: an opportunity and a barrier to health as a bridge for peace in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Policy Brief. Aug 2020. https://sight.nu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Policy-Brief-COVID19-pandemic-an-opportunity-and-barrier-to-HBP-140820.pdf

## | OBJECTIVES

Hosted by the Lancet-SIGHT Commission on Peaceful Societies through Health and Gender Equality, this webinar will preview the Commission's research on the relationships among health equity, gender equality, and peaceful societies. Speakers will examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in fragile and conflict-affected settings. The Commission argues that interventions to promote gender equality and health equity must be part of the effort to "build back better" after the pandemic. Such interventions must be acutely aware of the patterns of health inequity and gender inequality revealed by COVID-19 and explicitly work to address them. Experts will share their research as well as provide suggestions for how interventions to promote gender equality and health equity could contribute to the "reset" and better address the layered challenges of COVID-19 and armed conflict.

The webinar objectives are to:

- Present the Lancet-SIGHT Commission's conceptual framework on the relationships among gender equality, health equity and peaceful societies
- Discuss the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of conflict-affected settings, with a focus on its impact on health inequities and gender equality

- Examine how the pandemic has deepened gender inequalities, reflected in higher levels of gender-based violence, reduced access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, and a higher burden on health workers
- Examine how the pandemic has impacted on violence against humanitarian aid, including the delivery of health services by humanitarian actors
- Gather feedback on the Lancet-SIGHT Commission's work related to the health and gendered impact of COVID-19 in conflict-affected settings
- Identify how countries and the international community can best respond to the layered challenges of the pandemic and armed conflict, with a focus on health inequities and gender inequalities



Panelist

# Akjemal Magtymova

*Head of Mission and WHO Representative to the Syrian Arab Republic*

World Health Organization
Syrian Arab Republic

Dr Akjemal Magtymova assumed her functions as Head of Mission and WHO Representative to the Syrian Arab Republic as of 27 April 2020.

Having served as a clinical practitioner and a researcher in maternal health and human reproduction in Turkmenistan, Dr Magtymova dedicated the past 22 years to the international development working with UNFPA in Turkmenistan and the Lao PDR; with WHO in the countries of the South-East Asia Region (DPR Korea, WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia/ New Delhi, WHO Country Offices in Maldives and Nepal) and later joined WHO's Eastern-Mediterranean Region.

Before the current assignment, Dr Magtymova completed nearly 3 years as WHO Representative to the Sultanate of Oman, prior to which having served as Deputy Head and Emergency Coordinator of the WHO Country Office in Yemen, leading operations to address complex humanitarian emergency. During her tenure in the Republic of Maldives, she played an active role in peace processes as acting UN Resident Coordinator/Designate UN Security Official in addition to her portfolio as a WHO Representative.

At the global level, Dr Magtymova has been an active contributor to the development of WHO-led technical guidelines and research and authored/ co-authored a number of national and regional level technical publications. Dr Magtymova has had various functions throughout her career, including support to health reforms, leading multi-stakeholder policy dialogue for equitable health financing strategies with a focus on universal health coverage.

Dr Magtymova is a medical doctor specializing in Obstetrics and Gynecology with MSc in Health Systems Management from London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine distinctively combined with Master of Arts in International Affairs from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University. Dr Magtymova's professional aspiration is to promote global health and diplomacy for peace and sustainable development.