

Letter to the Editor

CONSERVATISM, CANCER, CONFLICT AND COVID-19: QUADRUPLE TRAGEDY FOR WOMEN LIVING IN WAR-TORN TRADITIONALIST SOCIETIES

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Dear Editor,

In many traditionalist societies, the women folk are yet to get the fairest share of life; this is majorly due to some conservative socio-economic and political principles, policies and laws that do not empower women in the domestic, political and socioeconomic spheres of some of these societies.¹⁻³ In fact, some of these societal laws go as far as restricting women from: having a say over their own life; their freedom, power, and independence; voting; and holding leadership positions in public governance and in corporate business administration.^{2,3} This is a very worrisome situation.

Not only the above, the women folks are a highly vulnerable group when it comes to issues of cancer.⁴ Of all the cancer types known to humans, the second most devastating cancer type in the world is women's breast cancer.⁴ In 2018 alone, about 2,088,849 newly diagnosed cases and 626,679 deaths were reported among women, globally, and reasonable proportion of these cases were from the low- and middle-income countries in conflict.⁴ Also, there are other cancer types that are affecting thousands of women.⁴

Conflicts had also brought about several calamities for women.^{5,6} As a matter of fact, after children, women are the most affected population group in periods of conflicts.

In conflict zones, women are often treated below human dignity, as some of them were trafficked, raped, maimed, and/or killed.^{5,6} Also, scientific evidence had shown that sick women, including women with breast cancer, are one of the worst hit groups during the period of wars, as many of them lack the financial capacity to cater for their medical needs.^{5,6}

Sadly, we are currently in the era of coronavirus disease 19 (COVID-19) pandemic where many countries in the world are currently enforcing restriction on human movement in order to deter the spread of COVID-19 through community lockdown.⁷ Unfortunately, the movement restrictions caused by lockdown have brought untold hardship on humans, more especially on women in the war-torn traditionalist societies, where many of them are living fearfully with highly restricted fundamental rights.^{8,9} To make it worse, some of these societies failed to fully involve women in key high-level decision making, as regards COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁰

In light of the above, it can be affirmed that social conservatism, cancer, conflicts and COVID-19 had brought untold hardships to the world, with the women folks being the worst hit groups.¹⁻¹¹ Going by the points raised earlier, it will be very laudable if the whole world can pay more attention on women needs, especially those

living in the traditionalist war-torn zones during this current era of COVID-19 pandemic.^{6,8-11} So far, the healthcare personnel, medical supplies, food and other COVID-19 relief package that had been deployed/sent to vulnerable people living in war-torn traditionalist places is largely inadequate, more especially those needed by women.^{10,11} Pertinently, most of the medical supplies sent to these zones were for the management of COVID-19, with very little or no provision for women living with non-communicable diseases such as cancer, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, etc.¹⁰

Finally, we recommend that all stakeholders involved should put in more efforts in holistically supporting women living in war-torn traditionalist societies in the world, especially during this current period of COVID-19 pandemic. More importantly, we recommend that women in such concerned societies should be fully involved in key high-level decision making on issues pertaining to women's health.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors have none to declare.

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