gender section
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gender bulletin



UNRWA school in Zarqa © 2016 UNRWA Photo

monthly updates on gender issues in UNRWA and the region

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update of the month

UNRWA is organizing the workshop 'Building Safety: Enhancing UNRWA Response to Incidents of Sexual Violence - The Manual' on 14-16 June 2016 in Amman. The workshop will bring together front line staff from field offices and HQ staff to test the first draft of the manual on Sexual Violence.

stories from UNRWA

Focus Groups in Jordan

"Which places do you consider unsafe?" asked the school counsellor. About 12 girls (aged 12 to 15) sat on the edge of their wooden chairs in the classroom of an UNRWA girls' school in Zarqa, Jordan. All raised their hands diligently. The focus group aimed to gather information on gender-based violence (GBV) risks, types of violence, and knowledge about available services. The group additionally aimed to deepen the girls' understanding of GBV. The girls actively discussed questions such as "Who would you tell if you experienced violence?" and "How would a family react if a girl had been subjected to sexual violence?"

After the girls' focus group finished, the school counsellor, who has received training on GBV, welcomed a group of 13 mothers into the classroom. This separate focus group for adults had the same approach and aim as the girls' group. Again, a case study was discussed and topics included marital age and the community's attitude towards violence. After an hour, the counsellor asked what the participants had learned that day. "We should teach our girls to speak up," one woman said. Another woman added: "We should raise our boys to respect women and to not become perpetrators of violence."

So far, a total of four focus groups were held in Zarqa for girls and for mothers. Groups for boys and fathers were scheduled to be held separately. These GBV focus groups are part of the Agency's 'Building Safety' programme, which is funded by the United States government.

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Safe Learning Spaces in Syria

Nearly 400 UNRWA students in eight different collective shelters in Damascus, Syria have been provided with academic support, psychosocial support and recreational activities as part of the 'Safe Learning Spaces' project. The activities aim to enhance the students' knowledge by providing them with educational and communication skills. This is to ensure that students do not drop out of school or end up in child marriages. The project also includes awareness-raising on gender-based violence (GBV), human rights and child rights through the cooperation of different UNRWA programmes and the involvement of parents and community members, among others.

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Building Safety Update

The Agency is creating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that focus on setting minimum standards for addressing and mitigating gender-based violence during emergencies. An assessment phase for the SOPs has recently been finalized. This included a desk review of key documents and consultations with programmes and fields. Entry points and key staff to engage with were identified. The SOPs will build on the work that is already happening at the programme and field level in terms of emergency preparedness and response.

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Inspiring Story

Female Students For President

Even though Palestinian universities have had more female than male students since 2005, most student body and class presidents have been men. However, more and more female students are elected into these positions. Dana Rwaidy was recently elected as student body president and has since received some criticism from her peers and the community because she is a woman. However, she says this comes from just a few individuals. "I think for the most part, Palestine is open to gender equality." Rwaidy wants to take an inclusive approach to leading her peers, and she will not be held back because of her sex. "I was taught that women can be anything and my family is very supportive of me," she says. Two more female students won the presidency at different universities in the West Bank. Read more

Events of Interest

2-22 June 2016 – London

'Call Me by My Name' is a multimedia exhibition featuring stories and works from refugees in Calais and beyond. Leading up to World Refugee Day on 20 June, many other associated events will take place, including a panel discussion about human trafficking. Read more

20 June 2016 – New York/World

To mark World Refugee Day, UNHCR is organizing the photo exhibition 'Where Children Sleep' in the New York Public Library. The photos by Magnus Wennman feature refugee children in Europe and the Middle East. Many other events will be held throughout the world on 20 June. Read more

15 September 2016 – World

Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society seeks submissions for papers for their issue on displacement. The journal welcomes submissions on a variety of topics within the theme of displacements. Papers should be submitted by 15 September 2016. Read more

Regional News

Egypt

Egypt's implementation of the law to end female genital mutilation (FGM) has been criticized after a 17-year-old girl bled to death while undergoing FGM. More than 9 in 10 females aged 15-49 in Egypt have estimately undergone FGM even though the practice was banned in 2008. While practicing FGM is punishable in Egypt and can lead to two years of imprisonment, rights groups say the law has not been enforced. Read the article

Jordan

Last month about 100 people took to the streets in Amman to raise awareness on verbal harassment against women in Jordan. As verbal harassment in Jordan is not criminalized, it can limit outdoor activities for women, according to an organizer of the walk. A recent change in the Penal Code includes increased punishments for harassment, but the amendments have not yet been approved by the Parliament. Read the article

Reports & Resources

UNFPA

The situation of women and girls in Syria and its neighbouring countries puts them at increased risk of gender-based violence (GBV). The report 'More than Numbers' provides an overview of their situation. A list of challenges and recommendations for designing programmes and strategies to address GBV is included in the report. Read the report

UN Women

In all societies, many ideas about femininity and masculinity are harmful for women, girls, men and boys. The 'Self-Learning Booklet: Masculinities and Violence Against Women and Girls' aims to provide a better understanding of masculinities for anyone interested. The booklet includes examples, quizzes and further resources. Read more

OECD

The '2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life' gives governments, parliaments and judiciaries guidelines to effectively implement gender equality and gender mainstreaming initiatives and improve equal access to public leadership. Read more

UNFPA

The UNFPA 'Facilitator's Guide' enables persons to conduct training workshops on how to report on gender-based violence (GBV) in the Syria crisis. A training includes an introduction to GBV and additionally focuses on ethical principles of reporting on GBV. Read the report

DFID

The 'DFID Guidance Notes' discuss how to address harmful social norms in the context of programming to prevent violence against women. The notes include discussions on social norms, a framework for programme design, case studies and best practice examples. Read the report

Women's Refugee Commission (WRC)

More than two-thirds of refugees live in cities, where they face significant risk of gender-based violence (GBV). Therefore, the WRC developed tools to assess GBV risks in urban settings and tools to map existing services in order to respond to urban refugees' risks of GBV. Read more

Facts of the month

Globally

1/122 persons is now either **a refugee, internally displaced**, or **seeking asylum.** Read more

Every day women conduct

4.5 **hours of free labour** in household chores and childcare

regardless of where they are in the world. Read more

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UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip achieve their full human development potential, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, protection and microfinance.

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