gender section

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gender bulletin



UNRWA Syria Field Office, Damascus © 2017 UNRWA photo by Tamara Abu-Nafiseh

monthly updates on gender issues in UNRWA and the region

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update of the month

To mark the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence campaign (25th November -10th December), UNRWA will be holding a panel discussion on the 6 December. The panel discussion will address the recent regional changes in legal frameworks related to violence against women and their effect on the work of UNRWA in the area of GBV programming and service provision.

stories from UNRWA

Roll-out of UNRWA GBV Guidelines in Syria
Integration of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Programming into Emergencies:

GBV occurring in emergencies is not created in vacuum; emergencies occur against the backdrop of a certain set of gender power dynamics. Whereas the main causes of GBV are rooted in gender inequality and discrimination, risks of GBV are exacerbated when protective systems and structures erode during emergencies, increasing both vulnerabilities and risks. Other factors which exacerbate the risk of GBV include: increased militarization, displacement, scarcity of resources, disruption of community services, and at times, changing cultural and gender norms.

It is within this context that GBV must be understood as a life-threatening protection issue which needs to be taken into account from the onset of emergencies. In this respect, UNRWA developed the project Building Safety: Mainstreaming GBV Interventions into Emergency Preparedness, Prevention and Response within the context of the Safe from the Start Initiative. The project involves multiple levels of action to increase the Agency's capacity to address GBV in emergencies, including the provision of technical guidance and the design of supporting tools in the sphere of prevention, mitigation and response.

The development of sectoral Guidelines on the Integration of GBV Risk Mitigation in Emergency Response in the form of technical instructions, which aim at establishing key actions for the mitigation of GBV in emergencies, is one of the main project components.

The guidelines, finalized earlier in 2017, aim at contributing to the enhancement of the Agency's emergency preparedness and response capacity through the incorporation of a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of both the particular risks and experiences of women, men, girls and boys, as well as the intersectionality of vulnerability and risk factors such as age, disability, and gender across these groups.

To launch the roll-out of the guidelines, the Gender Section at HQ carried a two-day training in Syria, engaging 25 field colleagues involved in emergency response who are not specialized on GBV. Staff invited to the training included shelter managers, education staff, health staff, relief social workers, as well as Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme (ICIP) staff. Building on previous capacity-building efforts on GBV, the training began with a refresher on key concepts related to GBV, with an in-depth focus on GBV in emergencies. The focus of the training was to use case studies relevant to experience UNRWA has gained in Syria to build staff capacity in identifying gender and GBV-related risks and identifying key actions to address them. The workshop further emphasized key tools that can be of support to front-line staff, including safety audits and community participation tools. The training relied on resources which accompany the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action.

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Inspiring Story

Female Arab Entrepreneurs Empowering Women through Their Start-Ups

In Egypt, a number of young women have launched and lead their own start-ups. The start-ups range from intellectually stimulating magazines for women to a pole fitness studio, one that brings together women-led businesses, one that connects women with business resources through large-scale workshops and conferences or a mobile application supporting women to combine motherhood and careers. Shadw Helal came up with the "Rescue" application to help protect women from sexual harassment. When activated, the application connects with a network of volunteers scattered across different areas that can come to the rescue. Read more.

Events of Interest

62nd Session of the Commission of the Status of Women

12—23 March '18. UN HQ, New York.

The Commission on the Status of Women is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. In its 62nd session, the priority theme to be discussed is "challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls". Read more.

Sexual Violence in Conflict Settings and Emergencies

19 — 23 March '18. Geneva, Switzerland.

The Geneva Centre for Education and Research in Humanitarian Action is offering a short course to provide mid-level or senior managers with the skills required to develop and adapt a multidisciplinary approach to prevent and mitigate sexual violence and to integrate it into assistance programmes. Read more.

Regional News

oPt

As part of the reconciliation agreement signed by Hamas and Fatah on Oct. 12, Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas announced that Gazans will be able to enlist in the PA security services, including women. The enlistment of women to security services has the potential to reduce the levels of poverty and unemployment in Gazan society, currently at the level of 41.1 per cent. Read more.

Jordan

At the beginning of October, the 'Goal 5 Coalition' representing civil society, parliamentarians and city councils was formed in a bid to increase women's political participations in the Kingdom. The coalition aims to fight for gender equality beyond the elections of 2017 when over 30 per cent females were appointed and elected. Read more.

Lebanon

According to the annual Gender Gap Index issued by the Geneva-based World Economic Forum published in October, Lebanon falls to 135th place in the list of 144 nations. In terms of female political participation, the country is ranked 141st due to its low number of women holding public office. However, when it comes to enrolment in secondary and tertiary education, Lebanon ranked first. Read more.

Global

Following the countless allegations of sexual harassment and abuse against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, millions of women worldwide followed a call by actress Alyssa Milano to share their own stories on social media using the hashtag #metoo, in order to give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem. This way, the story moved beyond any one man and became a broader conversation about men's behaviour towards women and the imbalance of power. Read more.

Reports & Resources

OECD report on Women's Economic Empowerment in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

The new OECD report examines how current legal provisions in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia are impacting women's ability to fully participate in economic life, both as employees and entrepreneurs. It is based on a comparative analysis of the various rights set out in constitutions, personal status laws, labour laws, in addition to tax and business laws. According to the report, women in the MENA countries are better educated and better skilled than ever. Yet this has not translated into equal access to employment, entrepreneurship and public life. Read more.

Journal of Middle East Women's Studies

The Journal of Middle East Women's Studies aims at advancing Middle East gender, sexuality and women's studies through the contributions of academics, artists, and activists from around the globe. It is the leading journal publication venue for scholars working on gender and sexuality topics across the Middle East and North Africa. In its current issue "Borders and Margins", the journal addresses topics such as "Gendered Geopolitics", "Gender Equality in the context of the Kurdish Peace Movement" and the "Gendered Side of Islamophobia". Read more.

Equality Now

The report "The Global Rape Epidemic" looks at laws on rape and sexual assault in 82 jurisdictions—including 73 UN member states—from around the world and analyses whether they provide sufficient protection. The findings illustrate that laws are insufficient, inconsistent, not systematically enforced and, sometimes, promote violence. The report calls on governments to transform their laws, policies and practices into instruments to a) prevent sexual violence, b) provide better access to justice for victims (including specialised services) and c) effectively punish sexual violence crimes. Read more.

Facts of the Month

About 90 per cent

of the countries around the world have at least one gender-discriminatory law in their legal frameworks. Read more.

At least 26 per cent

of men in the Middle East and North Africa agree that a woman should tolerate violence to keep the family together. 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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