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Advocacy for Action: Ensuring Accessible and Inclusive Gender-Based Violence Services for Women with Disabilities in the West Bank

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Women and girls with disabilities in the West Bank have faced increased discrimination, stigma, economic hardship, and exclusion, all of which have been catastrophically intensified by the escalation of violence since 7 October 2023. This has left one of the most marginalised groups in Palestinian society at heightened risk of sexual violence, financial exploitation, neglect and reproductive rights violations, while their access to gender-based violence (GBV) services has been severely curtailed due to new and overlapping risks of displacement, movement restrictions, and the disruption of essential services.

The findings of the paper show that survivors face multiple risks, including sexual violence, financial exploitation, reproductive rights violations, and neglect. Yet, access to services remains limited due to inaccessible infrastructure, lack of public transportation and facilities, insufficient accessible information, social stigma, guardianship laws, and the lack of disability-sensitive training among frontline actors. Institutional mechanisms remain under-resourced, and data gaps continue to hinder evidence-based programming.

This paper was developed through joint efforts by the GBV AoR members in the West Bank. The findings and recommendations in this paper are drawn from a mixed-methods approach that combined a review of secondary resources, a survey, and focus group discussions (FGDs). The desk review analyzed reports to capture the situation of women and girls with disabilities in the West Bank, highlighting pre-existing challenges and how these have deepened over the past two years. To complement this, the GBV AoR conducted a survey completed by 15 member organizations (3 international and 12 local) working on GBV and disability to assess staff training, the types of disabilities supported, accessibility of services, and practices of data disaggregation. Finally, two FGDs were held with women with disabilities (WWD), facilitated by Stars of Hope Society (SHS) and QADER for Community Development, which provided critical insights into their lived experiences, challenges, and recommendations—ensuring that the paper reflects both evidence and the voices of those most affected.

and initial coordination efforts to include WWD in GBV response—these remain insufficient. Despite these efforts, WWD continue to face systemic barriers in accessing inclusive GBV services. Building on these initial steps, urgent and sustained action is needed to close the gaps and ensure that services are truly accessible and responsive to their needs.

The paper calls for a shift to a rights-based, inclusive, and coordinated approach. Key priorities include legal and policy reform, institutional strengthening, capacity building of frontline providers, accessible service delivery, stigma reduction at the community level, systematic collection of disability-disaggregated data, and the empowerment and meaningful participation of WWDs in GBV programming. Without such measures, humanitarian and protection responses risk leaving behind one of the most marginalized and at-risk groups in Palestinian society.

This paper is structured to first present the policy and programmatic recommendations, drawn from the main findings. It then provides contextual analysis of the foundational challenges faced by WWD in the West Bank prior to 7 October 2023, followed by an examination of the additional risks that emerged after the recent escalation of violence. Finally, it explores the barriers that prevent WWD from reporting violence or accessing GBV services, highlighting how these overlapping challenges contribute to their heightened vulnerability and link directly to the policy recommendation.

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